THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

UNDERSTANDING THE APOCALYPSE

BY STEVEN SHERMAN

THE BOOK OF REVELATION VIEWED FROM A HEBRAIC MINDSET

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REVELATION 1: 1-20
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Revelation 1:1-2

> *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

THE TORAH, THE Prophets and the Writings reveal God's plan of redemption through the promised Anointed One of Israel. The Gospels are the account of the life, ministry, substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. The Book of Acts and the epistles give an historical account of the spread of the Gospel and the sanctification of the elect. The revelation of Jesus Christ is the substance of the contents of the final book of the biblical canon. It is an unveiling of the person and work of the Son of God. The Book of Revelation is written in a unique literary form. This type of writing or *genre* is classified as *apocalyptic literature*. Apocalyptic writings transmit divine revelation which has been imparted to God's prophet by means of symbolic filled dreams or visions.

The *Apocalypse* or *Book of Revelation* is a prophetic book of the Bible that was presented in the form of an epistle or divinely inspired letter and contains much symbolic language. The symbols are spiritual pictures that represent actual persons, groups of people and events that

have already been or will be manifested in the natural realm. The Bible is its best own interpreter. The interpretation of these various symbols is found in the Book of Revelation itself or in other books of the Bible.

Revelation is a consummation of biblical prophecy disclosing the future of the Jew, the Gentile and the body of Messiah. Therefore in order to be accurately interpreted, it is necessary to have a working knowledge and Spirit-led understanding of the entire Bible. Especially important is to have an understanding of the first five books of the Hebrew canon known as the Five Books of Moses (called the Torah in Hebrew or Pentateuch from the Greek), the Messianic Psalms and the Major Prophets of the Old Testament as well as the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), 1 Corinthians and 2 Thessalonians in the New Testament. It is also beneficial to have insight into the culture and customs of the times in order to interpret the Scriptures in their proper historical context.

Revelation 1:3

> *Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*

The very first verse of the Book of Revelation declared to the churches of the first century that something "must soon take place." As this letter was first read aloud to each of the churches before it was copied and passed along, a blessing is promised to the one who reads the words of this prophecy and a blessing is promised to those who listen and take it to heart. Do you know why are those who heed this message promised a blessing? Because the time was near for "what" must soon take place," and they had to be prepared for it spiritually and emotionally.

"What" was to soon take place was not the Fall of Jerusalem. With the exception of the western wall (Wailing Wall), the outer walls of the city were broken down and the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Roman legions. In the A.D. 95, John the Apostle was apprehended by the proconsul of Asia and sent to Rome. Emperor Domitian banished John to the Isle of Patmos. The tyrant Domitian was slain in September of A.D. 96. All of his edicts and public acts

were declared void by a decree of the Roman Senate on account of his excessive cruelty; and his successor, Nerva, recalled all those whom he had banished. The Apostle John returned to Ephesus in A.D. 97 where he became bishop. Since this book of prophecy was penned a quarter of a century after Jerusalem fell, its prophetic message was not fulfilled in a past event. "What" was soon to take place was not the Fall of Jerusalem. "What" was soon to take place concerns today's Christian as much as the Christians of the first century. What soon occurred was not the rapture of the church but severe persecution of the followers of Christ. Christians have suffered persecution and martyrdom for nearly two millennia. Today in Muslim countries, under dictatorships, and under communism, untold numbers of men and women are facing jail, torture, and even death for their faith in Christ. The Book of Revelation is a letter to all Christians. It is a call for patient endurance and exhorts the believer to stand firm until the end. Those who have placed their faith in the Messiah can take heart because Jesus has assured his followers of final victory.

Revelation 1:4-5a

> *John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:*
> *Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

In John's salutation, he does not refer to himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ as did Peter and Paul when they wrote their epistles. By simply referring to himself as John, the writer indicates that he had an intimate, personal relationship with the members of these congregations. John most likely was a circuit preacher in western Asia where these churches resided. They were located on a circuitous mail route. Starting with Ephesus, each city was approximately 50 miles from the next city in a clockwise direction.

Since there were other churches in this area that are mentioned in the biblical account including the churches at Colosse, Miletus and Hieropolis, I believe that the seven churches of Revelation were selected because they typify the problems and the accomplishments of

local churches throughout this present evil age. I do not believe that the persecution and faithfulness of the church of Communist China is any less than that faced by the Thessalonians. Nor is the liberality of the churches of today that ordain gay ministers much different from those in Sardis who had soiled their garments of righteousness.

John's greeting is from all three members of the Godhead. Grace and peace from the "I AM" (God the Father), from the seven spirits or sevenfold Spirit before His throne (God the Spirit), and from Jesus Christ (God the Son).

Revelation 1:5b-6

> *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

We who were dead in sins and trespasses have not only been set free by the shed blood of the sinless Lamb of God but have been made a royal priesthood to minister to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Revelation 1:7

> *Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.*

Many of those who embrace a pre-tribulation rapture view believe the rapture is a secret event. In such a view, the elect in Christ only hear the loud command and call of God. A secret rapture is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture that states that every eye will see Jesus at His appearing in the air. Is it not logical that the rapture will be an event of biblical proportions emphasized by a worldwide demonstration of the power and glory of the Lord? It seems as though the rapture will be heralded by the glorious presence of Christ, a thunderous shout, the booming voice of the archangel, and trumpet blasts heard around the globe. There will be such a cacophony of sound and such an authoritative command from the Lord that the dead in Christ shall be raised to life. This would not be a secret event but surely one of the most dramatic and witnessed events in world history!

On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.
—Zechariah 12:9-10

The return of the Lord in the air to gather the elect from the four winds at the rapture will fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah: *They will look on me, the one they have pierced.* As the church is raptured, the Lord will command His angels to pour out the bowls of his wrath upon the earth striking all the nations of the earth that have gathered against Jerusalem.

Revelation 1:8

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the LORD God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

In the eight verse of chapter one of the Book of Revelation, "I am the Beginning and the End," is the proclamation of the Eternal One, the Almighty God.

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.
—Revelation 22:12-13

Jesus, the soon coming King is also called the Alpha and Omega. God the Father and God the Son are coeternal and coequal. Jesus is not a created being (the Archangel Michael), as claimed by the Jehovah's Witnesses. He is fully man and fully God.

Revelation 1:9-11

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to

the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia & Laodicea."

John declared to the Christians who read this letter (the Book of Revelation), that he shared in suffering for the kingdom's sake. John encourages the church by reminding us that patient endurance, a fruit of the Spirit, is available to those in Jesus who suffer because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. "What" was soon to take place was intense persecution. Historically, the Romans regarded the Jewish Christians as another sect of Judaism called the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9,23) or the Nazarene sect (Acts 24:4,14; 28:22). During the siege of Jerusalem, there was an opportunity for the Jewish Christians to heed the words of Jesus and flee to the mountains to escape (Mark 13:14; Luke 21:21). After the Fall of Jerusalem, Jews who did not follow Jesus became even more hostile to those of The Way for deserting them during the first revolt against Rome.

The Jewish religion was officially recognized by Rome. This meant that a practicing Jew was exempted from kneeling before images of the emperor. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple was gone and Jewish people could only worship in synagogues. The leaders and members of the synagogues were exempted from emperor worship. The non-believing Jews were angered because the Jewish Christians deserted during the siege of Jerusalem. They had the members of the Way removed from the synagogue rolls and the names of those who followed Christ were given to the Roman authorities. When Christianity was no longer considered a sect of Judaism, the Christians were required to show their allegiance to the state and the state religion by bowing down to the emperor's image. Many Christians refused to bow and became martyrs for the faith.

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

—Matthew 10:22

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

—Romans 8:17

Those who truly are the Lord's followers will suffer persecution. But rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is the reward given to those who suffer for righteousness sake.

Revelation 1:12-16

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

When John looked to see who was speaking to him; John the Revelator like the prophet Daniel, describes someone "*like a son of man*" who is an awe inspiring figure.

"As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.

—Daniel 7:9

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

—Micah 5:2

The Ancient of Days is the eternal Son of God who was born in the town of David.

Revelation 1:17-18

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

The keys to death and Hades are in the hands of the One who conquered death by being the firstborn from the dead. Jesus reigns over both physical and spiritual death.

> *"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?*
>
> —Hosea 13:14a

> *When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*
>
> —John 19:30

"It is finished or paid" Christ satisfied God's justice by his substitutional death on the cross. The Messiah has paid your debt of sin with His own blood.

> *"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*
>
> —Revelation 1:19-20

> *What is now was the spiritual condition of the seven churches. What will take place later are the events of the last days: No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: " 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.*
>
> —Acts 2:16-17

... These last days began at Pentecost.

REVELATION 2:1-11
EPHESUS AND SMYRNA

IN ORDER TO more adequately interpret Christ's message to the seven churches in the province of Asia, it is necessary to learn about each location where the local churches ministered. The religious, economic and political practices of each city, as well as, the geographic peculiarities of their particular location will shed light upon our understanding of Jesus' comments concerning each local body.

> *"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary'.*
>
> —Revelation 2:1-3

It is understandable that the first church to be addressed is the church at Ephesus. It is a church founded by the Apostle Paul and later pastored by Timothy. Paul not only wrote an important epistle to the Ephesian Church, but also wrote two letters to Timothy while Timothy ministered there. It is believed that Apostle John wrote the *Gospel According to John* and 1st, 2nd and 3rd John during his ministry

there as well. Six books of the New Testament were written to or at Ephesus. It is no wonder that the church at Ephesus is known as the Apostolic Church. This church had firsthand knowledge of the teachings of the apostles and was able to challenge *those who claimed to be apostles but who were not.*

Ephesus was the most important city of Proconsular Asia. It was a prized commercial and export center. A traveler from Rome landing at Ephesus would proceed up a magnificent 35 foot wide avenue lined with columns that led from the harbor to the center of the city. By NT times it had a population of over one quarter million people. Three great trade routes converged at the city. It was a free city that had been granted self-government by Rome. Ephesus boasted of a major stadium, marketplace and theater.

The imperial cult (emperor worship) was not neglected in Ephesus. Although temples were erected to emperors Claudius, Hadrian and Severus, the major religious attraction was the Temple of Artemis — one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This temple was about 4 times the size of the Parthenon. The temple was 425 feet long, 220 feet wide and about 60 feet high. It boasted of 127 pillars of Parian marble which is semitranslucent and pure-white. Thirty six of the columns were overlaid with gold and jewels. Artemis was an Anatolian fertility goddess. The Anatolian Peninsula is a region of Southwest Asia which corresponds today to the Asian portion of Turkey. Inside the Temple of Artemis was a bizarre statue of the "fertility" idol, the original of which was apparently carved from a meteorite that had "fallen from heaven" (Acts 19:35). Temple prostitution and drunken dissipation drew the pagan masses into depraved idolatry.

The words of chapter 2 and verses 1-7 of the Book of Revelation were written to the angel of the church of Ephesus. The message was intended to reach both the members of this local body and the angel who had charge over the church. Both the Angelic hosts, as well as, the demonic hoards are organized in a hierarchy of power and authority and are assigned to specific locations or persons.

Christ holds (controls/rules over) the seven stars (angels). He is the Captain of the Heavenly Hosts. The Commander-in-Chief walks

among the 7 golden lampstands (the 7 churches in western Asia). His presence is manifested and He dwells among his people.

Christ commends the church at Ephesus for its orthodoxy and perseverance, yet rebukes them for love gone cold.

> *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.*
>
> —Revelation 2:4-5

Christ rebukes the Ephesians for forsaking their first love. We are to fulfill the great commandment and the great commission. We are to demonstrate our love for God by our love for one another and then go and preach the Gospel and make disciples. This church was plagued by wicked men who claimed to be apostles. These false teachers among the flock created an atmosphere of disharmony and suspicion. The loving fellowship became inhospitable and wary.

Acts 19: 23-41

> *About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."*
>
> *When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. Even*

some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

New believers are often in love with Christ and on fire. They are often naively bold for the faith. The church had lost its first love. Although they were orthodox in belief, they may have isolated themselves from the hostility of the surrounding culture. The church may have refrained from participating in the pagan practices, but may have been intimidated by the religious fanaticism associated with the Temple of Artemis of the Ephesians. Sometimes during the frenzy two hours of chanting and shaking, some men would voluntarily castrate themselves and become eunuchs so that they could serve in the temple.

When a Christian forsakes his first love and ceases to share the faith, God will hold it against him. Jesus called the Ephesian church to repent and do the things that they did at first - to love one another and spread the "Good News," in spite of their hostile, pagan environment. *If you do not repent - I will come and remove your lampstand.* The

local church will cease to exist when it ceases to perform its divinely ordained function.

> *But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*
>
> —Revelation 2:6

After his reprimand, Christ commends this church for hating, as He does, the practices of the Nicolaitans. Their practice was to engage in idolatrous practices and the accompanying immorality in the guise of spiritual liberty.

Ephesians 4:17-24

> *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*
>
> *You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

The Ephesians heeded the warnings of Paul. They grew to hate the practices of the Nicolaitans. They refrained from impure practices and rejected the wicked teachings of the false apostles. Yet, without love, their orthodoxy was fruitless. *If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* 1 Corinthians 13:2

He who has an ear, let him hear... There are those within the local body that have spiritual ears and a heart that can receive the Word of God, They will be encouraged by commendation and be open to correction. Those who do not have an ear to hear will be further hardened by the message, as was Pharaoh. *To he who overcomes* - Rev

12:11 reads, *They overcame him* (Satan) *by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.* The Ephesians, if they are willing to repent and do the thing they did at first, will inherit eternal life. If they will love one another and preach the Gospel in a hostile environment even at the risk a martyr's death, will reap eternal rewards.

Ephesus was not the provincial capital of Asia, although it was an important center of trade and boasted a 25,000 seat theater, a stadium and one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. This was a city, not unlike our modern metropolises. New York City is not the state or federal capital, yet is an important economic, entertainment and cultural center. This worldly and carnal stronghold is full of pagan practices and ridicules Christian beliefs. It is not enough to sit in our churches and be proud of our orthodoxy, but we must engage the culture. We are called to shine our light out into the darkness.

> *"To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*
>
> —Revelation 2:8-9

Smyrna - the root of this word is myrrh which means; bitterness. Myrrh is an ointment which is associated with death and burial. The church at Smyrna died to self and endured bitter persecution. *I know your afflictions and poverty* - although they were poor in the eyes of the world, they were spiritually wealthy. The church at Laodicea claimed to be rich but the members of this local church were spiritually bankrupt.

Smyrna is modern day Izmir. It is the only one of the 7 cities still in existence. Smyrna was about 35 miles north of Ephesus and was located on the east shore of the Aegean Sea. This was a beautiful and proud city that boasted a famous stadium, library and the largest public theater in Asia. Its famous thoroughfare was called the *Street of Gold* and curved around Mt. Pagus which rose 500 feet above the harbor. At either end of the road was a temple – one to Cybele and the other to Zeus. Ancient coins describe the city as *First in Asia in*

beauty and in size. It was the first city in the ancient world to build a temple in honor of *Dea Roma* (the goddess Rome) and in 23 B.C., Smyrna won permission (over ten other Asian cities) to build a temple to emperor Tiberius.

This strong allegiance to Rome plus a large unsaved Jewish population that was actively hostile to Christians made it exceptionally difficult to live as a Christian in Smyrna. The Jews were allowed to practice their religion and were not bound to worship Caesar. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Jews may have viewed the worship of an unscholared Galileean as blasphemy. In addition, the Christian Jews may have been viewed as traitors by the Zealots since they fled Jerusalem during a break in the siege of the city in obedience to the warnings of Jesus. Therefore, the non-believing Jews took the names of the Jewish followers of Jesus off of their synagogue membership rolls, turned the Christian Jews out of their synagogues and turned their names over to the Roman authorities. The Jewish follower of Messiah then was subject to the loyalty test. He was no longer exempted from bowing before an image of Caesar. If he failed to worship Caesar as Lord, it was considered an act of treason that was punishable by death.

The most famous martyrdom of the early church fathers was that of the elderly Polycarp. The 12th martyr in Smyrna refused to acknowledge Caesar as Lord and was placed upon a pyre and burned to death. The Roman church and state were melded together in the person of Caesar, a type of the Antichrist. While the Empire of Rome and its official state religion a foreshadowing of the one world false religion and realm of the Beast to come.

REVELATION 2:12-17

PERGAMUM, "WHERE SATAN HAS HIS THRONE"

Revelation 2:12-13

> *"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:*
> *These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.*
> *I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives*

ABOUT TEN MILES inland from the Aegean Sea stood the impressive capital city of Pergamum. This Roman provincial capital was erected on a cone-shaped mountain that rose a thousand feet in height. Pergamum means *citadel* or *fortress*. This city was a center of Hellenistic culture. Pergamum became the seat of Babylonian sun worship. It was a center of idolatry and demon controlled religions with splendid temples to Nature. On the hills of Acropolis stood resplendent buildings, statuary, palaces and the second greatest library in the Roman Empire that boasted of more than 200,000 volumes.

False religion flourished in Pergamum. It was the center for four of the most important of the pagan cults of that day – Asklepios, Dionysus, Athene and Zeus.

Pergamum was the famous site of the temple to Asklepios who was the Greek God of healing. According to myth, Asklepios became so skilled in the art of medicine that he was able to raise the dead. This offended to the gods of fate, and so Zeus slew him with a thunderbolt. After he realized Asklepios' importance to the world of men, Zeus placed him in the sky as the constellation Ophiuchus. The name, "serpent-bearer," refers to the Rod of Asklepios, which was entwined with a single serpent. This symbol has now become a symbol for physicians across the globe.

People from all over the Roman Empire came to seek healing in this pagan temple and the shrine area was inhabited by thousands of harmless snakes. In his temple people with health problems could bath in the water of the sacred spring, and in the patients' dreams Asklepios would appear in a vision to tell them how to cure their illness. Snakes were often used in healing rituals. Non-poisonous snakes were left to crawl on the floor in dormitories where the sick and injured slept.

Dionysus was also commonly known by his Roman name Bacchus. According to pagan tradition, Dionysus was a son of Zeus and a mortal woman. Dionysus was the god of wine, agriculture, and fertility of nature, who was also the patron god of the Greek stage. Dionysus also represents the outstanding features of mystery religions, ecstasy, personal delivery from the daily world through physical or spiritual intoxication, and initiation into secret rites. Alexander the Great was worshipped and believe himself to be Dionysus incarnated.

Athene was also known as the Roman goddess Minerva. Mythology claims that her mother, Metis, was the first wife of Zeus. When Zeus saw that Metis was pregnant, he was afraid that the child, if allowed to live, would be his doom. He swallowed Metis to prevent the birth. It didn't work. Athene sprang, fully armed and armored, from the head of Zeus but Metis was never seen again. Athene is the virgin goddess of intellect and invention. The city, Athens, was named in her honor.

Zeus was considered to be the supreme ruler of Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece, where the gods lived. Zeus was the leader of the gods and god of the sky and thunder in Greek mythology. His attributes included thunder and the lightningbolt, the scepter, and

the eagle. The Book of Revelation tells us that Pergamum was the city where Satan had his throne. Luke 10:18 records these words of Jesus, *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."* The thunderbolt or jagged "S" is a satanic symbol that was used by the Nazi Storm Troopers or "SS." During the times of the Maccabbes and the occupation of the Holy Land by the Syrians, Antiochus Epiphanes, a type of the Antichrist, erected an image of Zeus with a likeness of his own face on it, in the wing of the second Temple.

Pergamum was famous for its great altar of "Zeus the Savior." This altar jutted out near the top of the mountain. Around the base of the altar was sculpted a frieze which depicted the gods of Greece in victorious combat against the Titans (the ancient giants). It symbolized the triumph of civilization over barbarism.

> *Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.*
>
> —1 Corinthians 10:19-20

I believe that Satan is the spirit of the worship of Zeus and his demons are those represented by the other Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. There is good evidence that the book of Revelation was referring to the altar to Zeus when using the term, "The throne of Satan."

Pergamum was the official center in Asia for the *Imperial Cult* (emperor worship). In 29 B.C., Augustus granted permission for a temple to be erected in Pergamum to the *divine Augustus* and the *goddess Roma.* It became the first city in Asia to receive permission to build a temple to the worship of a living ruler. Pergamum had the dubious honor of having a throne-like altar to Zeus that overlooked the city as well as being the city that was the official center of emperor worship in the west.

It was in Pergamum, most probably during the reign of Domitian, that Antipas was murdered. He was most probably martyred for the faith for refusing to bow before an image of the emperor. The failure to revere the reigning Caesar as a god was not just an affront to the religious practices of Rome but considered disloyalty to the state. Therefore, the person refusing to engage in emperor worship was

considered a traitor and put to death. The martyring of Antipas, along with the increased persecution of Jewish Christians by non-believing Jews after the fall of Jerusalem, dates the writing of the Book of Revelation at 95 or 96 A.D.

Revelation 2:14-16

> *Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

Balaam, the son of Beor, was from Pethor in Mesopotamia. He was a very influential sorcerer or diviner who made his services available for those who would pay. Near the end of their Wilderness Journey, as the Israelites under Moses were advancing north into Moab just prior to their turning west to cross The Jordan River, King Balak of Moab hired Balaam to perform the impossible task of stopping them.

With the Israelites approaching, King Balak sent messengers to Balaam to get him to put a curse on the Israelites. The LORD however appeared to Balaam and warned him not to do it. King Balak then sent other messengers to Balaam with an offer of great riches if he would curse the Israelites. This time The LORD allowed Balaam to go with the messengers. Then the Scripture records the famous incident with Balaam's talking donkey on the journey to Moab.

When Balaam arrived in Moab, King Balak greeted him, but Balaam warned the king that he could only say what God allowed him. Balaam's oracles then followed, all of which blessed the Israelites instead of cursing them. By the time that he was done, the Holy Spirit had caused Balaam to speak a rich blessing upon Israel. When Balaam was unable to curse the children of Israel, he seduced them into sexual immorality and into worshipping other gods.

> *While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So*

> *Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.*
>
> —Numbers 25:1-3

> *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."*
>
> —2 Corinthians 6:14-16

The Lord both commended and rebuked the members of the church at Pergamum. They were commended for remaining true to Christ in spite of persecution. But they were rebuked because of those who held to the teachings of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans. The teachings of Balaam were in direct opposition to the commands of Torah.

> *When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you .You must be blameless before the LORD your God.*
>
> —Deuteronomy 18:9-13

The root of the word Nicolaitans comes from Greek nikao, to conquer or overcome, and laos, which means people and which the word laity comes from. The two words together especially means the destruction of the people and refers to the earliest form of what we call a priestly order or clergy which later on in church history divided people and allowed for leadership other than those led by the spirit of the risen Lord. A good translation of Nicolaitan would be "those who prevail over the people." This clerical system later developed into the papal hierarchy of priests and clergy lording over the flock.

The Council of Trent stated, "If anyone shall say that there is not in the Catholic Church a hierarchy established by the divine ordination, consisting of bishops, presbyters and ministers, let him be anathema." The teachings of the Nicolaitans were in direct opposition to the tenets of New Testament concerning leadership.

> *"But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant.*
>
> —Matthew 23:8-11

Revelation 2:17

> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.*

One of the symbolic meanings of white stone is pardon or acquittal. There is an allusion here to the custom observed by judges in ancient times, who were accustomed to give those who were being judged a white or black stone. Those who received a black stone were pronounced guilty. Those who received a white stone were declared innocent.

In ancient times guests invited to a banquet were given a white stone to serve as a ticket of admission. Those who are faithful to Christ are given a white stone for admission to the heavenly wedding banquet. Revelation 19 says, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb"

White stones engraved with the names of the victors were also common place at Roman Games and circuses. The white stone indicates not only pardon for sin but victory and reward.

Revelation 2:18-29
Thyatira, "You tolerate that woman Jezebel"

Revelation 2:18-19

> *"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.*

AFTER THE DEATH of Alexander the Great, the Greek Empire was divided amongst his four generals who were known as the Diodochoi. Seleucus I gained control of the territory north of Judea which is known today as Syria. Seleucus I founded the city of Thyatira as a military outpost to guard one of the approaches to his empire. Thyatira possessed no natural fortifications. In 190 B.C. the city fell to the Romans.

Under the stable conditions of the *Pax Romana* (Roman rule and enforcement over its dominions), Thyatira grew and prospered as a center for manufacturing and marketing. The waters of Thyatira were so well adapted for the dying of fabrics that Acts 16:14 described Lydia, Paul's first convert at Philippi, as a seller of purple fabrics. One outstanding characteristic of the city was the large number of trade guilds that flourished there. At Thyatira there were trade guilds for those who worked with wool, linen-workers, dyers, makers of outer garments, tanners, potters, bakers, slave traders and bronze-smiths.

The guilds held festivals which included sacrifices to and worship of the sun-god Tyrimnos (Greek – Apollo). The Roman emperor claimed to be Apollo incarnate. Both the divine guardians of Thyatira (Tyrimnos), as well as the ruling Caesar were acclaimed sons of Zeus. Of the seven churches, only in the letter to Thyatira does Jesus identify himself as the Son of God. The divine title of Jesus stands in sharp contrast to the blasphemous claims of the emperor and of the demonic guardian of the city of Thyatira.

Revelation 2:20-23

> *Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.*

Although refusal to participate in guild festivals would bring economic hardship to Christians, the members of the church at Thyatira performed good deeds of service and demonstrated their faith and love by their perseverance. After Christ commends the congregants of the church in Thyatira for evidencing their faith by performing loving deeds, they are sharply rebuked for tolerating that woman Jezebel who was a self-proclaimed prophetess.

In New Testament times, a true prophet or prophetess is God's oracle who speaks the Word of the Lord by the righteous teaching of biblical precepts. *To tolerate* is a verb that means: to allow to function without hindrance. The church in Thyatira allowed a so-called prophetess to lead God's people astray by her deceptive teaching. The church made no attempt to restrict or silence her.

Today, many mainline churches have adopted a liberal philosophy equating love with tolerance. They have tolerated the teachings of secular humanists that embrace the theory of evolution and deny God as Creator. They have tolerated the teachings of the so-called modern critics who deny the inspiration of Scripture. The liberals

are tolerant of the teaching of radical feminism which supports the *right to choose* but denies the personhood of the unborn child and the right of that child to be birthed alive. Tolerance no longer implies allowing for a forum to discuss both sides of an issue. Today, in order to be tolerant, one must be politically correct. Political correctness implies total agreement with the homosexual activist agenda. Any and all criticism is considered as hateful rhetoric. Those who embrace Christian principles of morality are the only group in society not to be tolerated.

I Kings 16:29—33

> *In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.*

After the death of King Solomon, his son Rehoboam rejected the counsel of the elders and took the advice of the young men who had grown up with him. When the people asked that Rehoboam lighten the heavy yoke that Solomon had placed upon them Rehoboam boasted, "My little finger is thicker than my father s waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions" (1 Ki 12:14b). The people of Israel had rejected the LORD as king because they desired a king like the nations had. The LORD warned the Israelites that a worldly king would take their sons and daughters as servants, take the best of their fields and vineyards and the people would become as slaves to their king. The king would increase the labors of the people in order to amass his own personal wealth. Solomon s yoke was heavy but bearable. Rehoboam's threats were the straw that broke the camel's back. The people rebelled and the nation was divided. The ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom were ruled by

Jeroboam, while the Southern Kingdom comprised of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained under the rulership of Rehoboam.

I Kings 12:26—33

Jeroboam thought to himself, "The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam."

After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." 29 One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people went even as far as Dan to worship the one there.

Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites. He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. And at Bethel he also installed priests at the high places he had made. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel. So he instituted the festival for the Israelites and went up to the altar to make offerings.

Jeroboam wanted to discourage the people of the Northern Kingdom (called Israel) from making the three annual religious pilgrimages to the temple which was located in the Southern Kingdom (Judah), so he promoted golden calf worship and instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month to rival the festival of the LORD which was held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Feast of Tabernacles/Sukkot).

Ahab not only considered it a trivial matter to engage in golden calf worship, but also married Jezebel the daughter of the king of Tyre and Sidon. The LORD describes the people of Sidon as malicious neighbors who are painful briers and sharp thorns (Eze 28:24). The false prophetess of Thyatira is called Jezebel, the same name as the pagan wife of evil King Ahab.

Queen Jezebel brought Baal worship into the Northern Kingdom. Baal was the son of El, the father of the gods and head of the Canaanite pantheon. Baal worship was conducted both in temples and in good weather outdoors in fields and on hilltops called *high places*. The cult of Baal included animal sacrifices, ritualistic meals, and licentious dances. High places had chambers for so-called sacred prostitution by male prostitutes and female harlots. Ashtoreth (Greek – Astarte) a Canaanite goddess was the consort of Baal. She was known as Ishtar by the Babylonians and is identified with the planet Venus. As Ashera, she is not only known as a goddess of sensual love, maternity and fertility, but also as the patroness of war. Jezebel attempted to have all the prophets of the LORD killed. Four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah dined at Jezebel's table.

In an attempt to win a spiritual battle, Jezebel took advantage of the weaknesses of the flesh and enticed Israel to sin. If a person would give in to physical temptation, then they would fall prey to spiritual adultery (idol worship) as well. In the first century, the church at Thyatira was vulnerable to the same enticements as is the church of today.

Not only is the flesh at war with the Spirit, but a Christian is also the target of Satan and the world. How can we be victorious against the world, Satan and the flesh in our daily walk?

Galatians 5:16-18

> *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

Revelation 2:24-29

> *Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come. To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority*

from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Knowing Satan's deep secrets is a reference to the Gnostic teaching that a believer could enter the stronghold of Satan to learn the limits of his power and emerge victorious. They taught the lie that a believer is unaffected spiritually by what he does with his body. Therefore, Thyatiran Christians could participate in the guild-feasts without damaging their spiritual walk and prove that evil is powerless over grace. This ploy was an attempt to appeal to a Christian's pride and in opposition to biblical precepts which urge Christians to come out and be separate, to touch no unclean thing and to be holy even as the LORD is holy. Drug dealers and pornographers are more than willing to offer a potential customer a free sample. Movie theaters, television stations and video rental establishments offer up exciting and tantalizing coming attractions. To hook a fish one uses bait. Sometimes a free sample becomes a very costly expenditure.

REVELATION 3:1-6

SARDIS, "YOU HAVE A REPUTATION FOR BEING ALIVE, BUT YOU ARE DEAD."

Revelation 3:1

> *"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.*

> *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD*
>
> —Isaiah 11:1-2

THESE ARE THE words of him who holds the seven spirits of God or the sevenfold Spirit of God. Jesse was King David's father. Isaiah prophesied that from his roots -a Branch (a title of the Messiah) will bear fruit. The word in Hebrew, Nezer means branch. Jesus (Yeshua) is the Christos (Moshiac/Messiah)-of Nazareth. Jesus the Messiah was known as Jesus of Nazareth although he was born in Bethlehem Ephratha which means the fruitful house of bread. The Bread of Life who was prophesied to bear fruit was born in the fruitful house of bread. The Branch who would rise from the stump of Jesse was brought up in Nazareth whose root meaning is branch. These are his words; the words of him who holds the sevenfold Spirit of God – the Spirit of the LORD, the Spirit of wisdom and of under-

standing, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. The number seven indicates heavenly perfection and completeness.

Revelation 3:1

> *"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.*

In the sixth century B.C. Sardis was one of the most powerful cities of the ancient world. But by Roman times, it was a city in decline. On three sides, nearly perpendicular rock walls rose up 1,500 feet above the lower valley to form a natural citadel to protect the citizens of Sardis. As the population grew, it became necessary to develop a lower portion of the city to the north and west of the acropolis (Greek word for a city built on a hill). Excavations in the lower city have unearthed a Roman theater and stadium, as well as, an exceptionally large (160' by 300') temple dedicated to Artemis.

In A.D. 17 Sardis suffered a catastrophic earthquake, but was rebuilt with considerable financial help from Emperor Tiberius. Sardis was a city of wealth and fame. Under Croesus, great quantities of gold were extracted. Jewelry discovered in cemeteries indicates great prosperity. It was at Sardis that and silver coins were first struck. Sardis claimed to first city to discover the art of dyeing wool.

Revelation 3:2-6

> *Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

Revelation 3:1-6: Sardis, "You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead."

The exhortation to wake up would be especially relevant to those in Sardis because twice in its history the acropolis had fallen due to the lack of watchfulness on the part of the defenders of the city. In 549 B.C., Cyrus captured the city by deploying a climber to work his way up a crevice on one of the nearly perpendicular walls of the mountain fortress. Again in 216 B.C., the city was captured in a likewise manner when a Cretan named Lagoras discovered a vulnerable point and made a daring ascent with a band of fifteen men. They opened the city gates from within and allowed the armies of Antiochus the Great to overpower the rebel Archaeus.

In the letter to Sardis there is no mention of the Nicolaitans, false apostles, the teachings of Balaam or a self-proclaimed prophetess like Jezebel. There is no reference to persecution or martyring. Although this church was unhindered by heretical teachings within or threatened without, it is harshly rebuked for incompleted deeds which gave it only an appearance of spiritual life.

Today, the National Council of Churches boasts of a membership in the tens of millions. The many mainline denominations that comprise this organization are dedicated to many fine social programs including feeding, clothing and sheltering those in need. They are active in their communities and support candidates who demonstrate political correctness. They have a reputation for being alive, but are spiritually dying. Performing good deeds without delivering the message of the gospel, or performing good deeds and delivering a watered-down version of the gospel, is secular-humanism in the guise of Christianity.

> *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.*
>
> —2 Thessalonians 2:3 KJV

Apostasy is an act of a professed Christian who knowingly and deliberately rejects revealed truth regarding the deity of Christ and redemption through his atoning sacrifice. Today there are many churches that not only deny the inerrancy of Scripture, but even the completed work of Christ on the cross.

REVELATION 3:7-13

PHILADELPHIA, "I WILL ALSO KEEP YOU FROM THE HOUR OF TRIAL ..."

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

—Revelation 3:7-13

TODAY, THE CITY of Philadelphia is known as the city of *brotherly love.* The ancient city of western Asia's name commemorates the loyalty and devotion of Attalus II to his brother Eumenes. *Philadelphus* means *lover of his brother.* Philadelphia was known for

its many temples and religious festivals. Because this city was located in a vine-growing district, the worship of Dionysus (god of wine and revelry) was its chief pagan cult. Philadelphia was located at the juncture of trade routes leading to the Roman provinces of Mysia, Lydia and Phrygia. Its location on the imperial post route from Rome by way of Troas, the chief port of Mysia, earned Philadelphia the title of the *gateway to the East.*

> *They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*
>
> —Acts 1:10-11

> *Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half the mountain moving north and half moving south.*
>
> —Zechariah 14:3-4

Just before the ascension of Christ into heaven, Jesus and the disciples were in the vicinity of Bethany which is located on the Mount of Olives (Luke 24:50-51). While the Lord was blessing them, Jesus was taken up before their eyes and a cloud hid Him from their sight (Acts 1:9). As their gaze was fixed skyward, the Master rose higher and higher until only the soles of His feet were visible. Finally, Jesus disappeared from their view.

> *"Look, there on the mountains, the feet of the one who brings good news, proclaims peace!*
>
> —Nahum 1:15a

This same Jesus, resurrected and glorified, will descend from heaven and the blessed feet of the Son of Man will once again stand upon the Mount of Olives. He will bring the good news of salvation to Israel and proclaim an era of unprecedented peace for the world.

The mile long ridge known as the Mount of Olives will no longer overlook the temple mount; but instead, it will be split into two halves forming a great valley.

> *In the last days the mountain of the LORD'S temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.*
>
> —Isaiah 2:2

> *"...But Jerusalem will be raised up and remain in its place...*
>
> —Zechariah 14:10b

All the land of Judah surrounding the holy city will be leveled but Jerusalem will be raised up.

Six hundred years before the birth of Christ, Ezekiel cried out to God and said:

> *"Ah, Sovereign LORD! Are you going to destroy the entire remnant of Israel in this outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?*
>
> —Ezekiel 9:8

The sin of the chosen people was exceedingly great. The land was full of bloodshed and the city was full of injustice. Idols were being worshipped in the temple. These abominations resulted in the visible divine Presence (Shekinah or glory presence) to depart the holy city. The Shekinah rose from above the ark and between the cherubim in the Most Holy Place and moved to the threshold of the temple (Ez 10:4). Then the glory presence stopped at the east gate of the LORD'S house (Ez 10:19). Finally the glory of the LORD went up from within the holy city and stopped at the Mount of Olives (Ez 10:23). When Christ returns, He will renew all things including the restoration of a visible divine Presence in the Most Holy Place. The glorified Son of Man will sit on His throne in heavenly glory (Mt 25:31). Jesus will return from heaven by descending to the Mount of Olives. He will enter the east gate and walk to the threshold of the temple. Finally, He will enter into the Holy of Holies and sit on His glorious throne. The Lord writes to the church in Philadelphia which is located at the *gateway to the East.* The Lord will enter the

Holy City by way of the east gate. The church in Philadelphia that is named *lover of his brother* has remained faithful to the One who a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Pr 18:24).

In Jewish culture, the expression *The Holy One* (ho hagios) was a familiar title for God (e.g., Isa 40:25; Hab 3:3). *The True One* (ho al~thinos) is an obvious reference to Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6). The anointed One of God (the Messiah or Christ) is entitled to a divine title because He, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead (Ro 1:3-4). The Holy and True One holds the key of David. The Christ is the perfect intermediary between man and God because He is truly both God and man.

> *I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut and what he shuts no one can open.*
>
> —Isaiah 22:22

In biblical days, the custom was to wear the ensign of office upon the shoulder as a token of sustaining the government. The same concept is expressed today by the epaulets worn by members of the armed forces. The messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9:6a reads: *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders...* The holy One of Israel came from the Father full of grace and truth and He has the authority (holds the key) to allow or bar entrance into the New Jerusalem (opens or closes the door). The government will be upon his shoulders and He shall reign forever and ever.

> *Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live upon the earth.*
>
> —Revelation 3:10

There is a popular teaching that claims the church (the called out people of God throughout the world), will be raptured (captured out - physically removed from the earth), before *those days* of great distress prophesied by Jesus during his *Olivet Discourse*. This *doctrine*

(teaching), is commonly known by theologians as the *Pretribulation Rapture* (Pre – before; tribulation - those days of great distress; Rapture - the act of Christ gathering His called out people from the earth to meet Him in the air). Those who hold to this view claim that the Rapture will occur seven years immediately preceding the return of Christ to the Earth to establish His Kingdom.

In the book of Daniel, there are prophetic passages in Chapter 9 concerning periods of time referred to as *sevens* or *weeks*. The term seven or week is interpreted to mean a seven year period of time. The reason that Bible scholars have determined that seven or week means seven years (a week of years), is based upon the Biblical regulation concerning the Sabbath of Years. The nation of Israel was not only commanded to observe the seventh day as a day of rest or Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11); but also, observe the seventh year as a year of rest for the land (the land to lie fallow), called the Sabbatical Year (Lev 25:1-7).

> *But in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath of rest, a Sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards.*
>
> —Leviticus 25:4

Israel never observed this regulation. This act of disobedience, as well as, intermarriage, idol worship and other sins of the nation, resulted in the people being taken into captivity. Daniel wrote his prophetic writings during the time that the Southern Kingdom known as Judah (the nation was divided after Solomon s reign into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms), was taken captive into Babylon (586 B.C.).

This captivity lasted for 70 years as was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 25:12). Daniel understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD (YHWH [Yahweh], the name of God most frequently used in the Hebrew Scriptures), given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years (Dan 9:2).

Leviticus 26:14-46 speaks of degrees of punishment for disobedience. When the time would come that Israel would refuse to carry out the commands of the LORD and violate His covenant, the LORD

would bring disease and defeat to the nation. The people would be taken into captivity by their enemies.

> *Then the land will enjoy its Sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths.*
>
> —Leviticus 26:34

Daniel chapter 9 and verse 24 speaks of *seventy sevens*. Judah was taken into captivity for 70 years. The land of the tribe of Judah and the city of Jerusalem were desolate for 70 years. The land had 70 consecutive years of Sabbath rests. Had Israel observed the ordinance of the Sabbatical Year it would have taken a period of 490 years to achieve those 70 Sabbatical Years. A Sabbatical Year was to occur once every 7 years. Two Sabbatical years were to be observed in 14 years; therefore, the land would experience 70 Sabbath rests after four hundred and ninety years. *Seventy sevens* is an expression that means 70 times 7 years and equals a total of 490 years (70 Sabbaths x 7 years per Sabbatical Year = 490 years).

Verse 27 of Daniel chapter 9 reads:

> *He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing* [of the temple] *he will set up an abomination that causes desolation until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.*

This passage of Scripture parallels time periods prophesied in the book of Revelation. One *seven* is a period of seven years or *week* of years. In the middle of the *seven* or halfway through the seven year period is three and one half (3½) years. Our modern day calendar is based on the time it takes the Earth to revolve once around the Sun or Solar Year of 365 1/4 days. The Jewish calendar of Biblical times was based on 12 months which were comprised of 30 days each. This Lunar calendar had a year of 360 days (12 months x 30 days = 360 days). Our calendar today requires periodic leap years to compensate for the 1/4 day each Solar Year that needs to be taken into account. The Jewish calendar required an additional added month

(13th month) to be periodically added to make up for the uncounted days on their calendar.

In the book of Revelation there are time periods of 42 months (Rev 11:2, 13:5).

Twelve months per year times 3½ years equals 42 months. This period of 42 months is equivalent to Daniel's middle of the *seven* (3½ years). Revelation 11:3 and Revelation 12:6 speak of a 1260 day period. Thirty days per month (Jewish calendar), times 42 months equals 1260 days (30 days x 42 months = 1260 days). Three hundred sixty days per year times 3½ years equals 1260 days as well. The terms middle of the *seven*, 3½ years, 42 months or 1260 days are all equivalent terms.

The one who sets up an abomination (an idol or image of himself), that causes desolation (the chosen people who refuse to bow down to an idol then flee the temple and the city of Jerusalem), will establish a covenant (an accord or pact), with the Jewish people for a period of time (seven years). This charismatic leader (the Antichrist), violates the agreement halfway through (3½ years after the signing), and sets up his own image to be worshipped (Rev 13:15). The second half of Daniel's 70th week (the 70th *seven* - the week of years or 7 year period at the end of the age), is a time of great persecution (Rev 12:17; 13:7), or distress for the *Elect* (the church, body of Christ, the set apart people of God).

Those who hold to the Pretribulation interpretation of these events claim that the church is raptured at the beginning of the 7 period. Therefore, those who are jailed or martyred for their faith during this period are not part of the church. These new converts are so called, "tribulation saints" who will endure the great distress of those days. This pre-trib theory is based on two key passages of Scripture:

> *For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
>
> —1 Thessalonians 5:9

> *Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live upon the earth.*
>
> —Revelation 3:10

Please note that the Scripture passage from Revelation 3:10 reads: *...I will keep you from the hour of trial...* (Emphasis: mine). Although the book of Revelation parallels the 7 year period of Daniel's *seven,* this passage does not say that I will keep you from the seven year period (seven or week) of trial; nor does this inspired Revelation of Jesus given to His servant John say 84 months or 2520 days or any other equivalent to 7 years. Instead, the passage speaks of the hour of trial. Daniel's *week* is understood as seven days in which each day represents a year of time. On the Jewish calendar, one year is comprised of 360 days. An hour is 1/24 of a day (24 hours per day). When we divide 360 days (1/7 of Daniel's week), by 24 (1/24), we can determine the length of time represented by the term *hour. The hour of trial* should not be interpreted as a period of 7 years (Daniel's *week*), but merely a period of 15 days (360 days divided by 24 = 15 days). The Earth is a sphere of 360 degrees, divided into time zones of 15 degrees each. Each zone represents one hour of time.

At the First Advent, Jesus made His triumphal entry riding lowly upon a donkey's colt on the 10th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar (the 10th of Nisan). This is the day when the Passover lamb is to be selected (Ex 12:3). We refer to this day as Palm Sunday (palm fronds are laid down at the feet of a king). Jesus partook of the Last Supper with His disciples and instituted the New Covenant in His blood on the eve of the Passover. He was crucified and entombed on the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus resurrected (rose from the dead), on the day when the Feast of First Fruits was celebrated. A sheaf of the first grain harvested was given as a wave offering on the day after the Sabbath of the Passover week (Lev 23: 9-14). Jesus who is the Firstfruits of the Resurrection (1 Co 15:23) rose from the dead on the day after the Sabbath (7th day). The tomb was empty early on Sunday morning (the first day of the week following the Passion Week). There was a period of one week and one day from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the day of Christ's resurrection, (Palm Sunday - Resurrection Sunday). Fifty days later, at the end of the Feast of Weeks, the Holy Spirit descended in power on Pentecost. The Law of Moses is fulfilled in Christ (Lk 24:44; Col 2:17). Just as these first four festivals, or Spring cycle of Biblical festivals (Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits and Weeks), were fulfilled in both the

natural and Spiritual realms at the first coming of Christ, we can be assured that the last three festivals will have a natural, as well as, a Spiritual fulfillment at His Second Coming.

The last three festivals or fall cycle of Biblical festivals: Rosh HaShana/Yom Teruah (New Year/Feast of Trumpets), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), and Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles), take place during the first fifteen days of the 7th month (Tishri), on the Jewish calendar. The festivals that the LORD established are pictures of Christ. The fifteen days (two weeks and one day), in which the last three festivals are celebrated, I believe relate significantly to the hour (15 day period) of God's wrath (Rev 3:10). We will be kept from the hour of God's wrath, but will endure through much of the distress of those days (1260 days). *Those days* will be cut short.

> *... but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.*
>
> —Matthew 24:22b

REVELATION 3:14-22

LAODICEA, "...BECAUSE YOU ARE LUKEWARM"

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

—Revelation 3:14-16

LAODICEA WAS LOCATED in the Lycus valley in southwest Phrygia at the juncture of two important imperial trade routes. The great road from the west (from Ephesus and from Miletus) ascends the Meander Valley due eastwards, until it enters "the Gate of Phrygia." In the Gate are a remarkable series of hot springs, and warm mud-baths, some in the bed of the Meander River, others on its banks. The Lycus Glen was always the most frequented path of trade from the interior to the west throughout ancient time. Laodicea was placed as a guard and door-keeper on this road, near the foot of the Lycus Glen, where it opens on the main valley of the Meander River. The city occupied an almost square plateau several hundred feet high, approximately two miles south of the Lycus River. Its sister cities were Hierapolis and Colossae. To the south of Laodicea were mountains that rose to more than 8,000 feet in height.

In Roman times, Laodicea became the wealthiest city in the Roman province of Phrygia. The fertile ground of the Lycus valley

provided good grazing for sheep. By cross breeding, sheep were raised which sported a soft, glossy black wool which was much sought after. Laodicea was also the chief medical center of Phrygia. Agriculture and commercial prosperity brought the banking industry to the area as well. A strong indication of the city's wealth was demonstrated after the devastating earthquake of A.D. 60. Laodicea was rebuilt without financial aid from Rome. Tacitus wrote, "Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources and without help from us."

Laodicea's major weakness was its lack of an adequate and convenient source of water. Its location had been determined by the road system rather than proximity to a source of fresh water. Thus water had to be brought in from springs near Denzili (six miles to the south) through a system of stone pipes approximately three feet in diameter. Archeologists have unearthed a public fountain house (the nymphaeum). The water supply came from the spring called Baspinar in the upper part of the Denzili: an aqueduct carried water from the spring by force of gravity to a clearing basin on the south side of Laodicea, and from there it was piped under pressure to a water tower that fed a water basin and feeding chambers, which in turn fed the fountains. The water supplied by the spring at Baspinar was tepid and not very palatable by the time it was piped to Laodicea.

Six miles north across the Bycus river stood Hierapolis, famous for its hot springs. The hot springs flowed across a wide plateau and spilled over a broad escarpment directly opposite Laodicea. The three hundred foot high and mile wide cliff was covered with a white encrustation. This spectacular natural phenomenon resulted when the mineral-laden waters cooled to a lukewarm temperature as they poured over the cliff depositing calcium carbonate residue. On the other hand, the sister city of Colossae boasted of a pure and cold supply of fresh water.

The Lord' words, "*So, because you are lukewarm- neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth*", are not referring to measurements on a spiritual thermometer. Rather, the terms are better understood in the context of the geographical setting The Lord would prefer that the deeds of the Laodicean church were either like the medicinal waters of Hierapolis: warm, comforting and spiritually

therapeutic, or spiritually refreshing and invigorating - like the cold waters of Colossae. Instead, the deeds of the church in Laodicea were like the tepid waters of their public fountains. Most likely the local citizenry of Laodicea became acclimated to the lukewarm water, just as the local church had grown spiritually complacent and satisfied with lukewarm works of faith. In the natural realm, an unsuspecting visitor to Laodicea might have taken a drink from the public fountain and repulsed, spat upon the ground. So in the spiritual realm, the Lord threatens to spit out the church in Laodicea if they do not repent from lukewarm deeds.

> *You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*
>
> —Revelation 3:17-18

The church in Laodicea was blinded by their pride and self-confidence. Financial prosperity is not necessarily an indication of spiritual blessings. The Lord had written to the church in Smyrna, *I know your afflictions and poverty - yet you are rich!* But the Lord rebukes the so-called wealthy church in Laodicea by calling the church wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. The church is counseled to buy gold refined in the fire, white clothes to wear and eye salve so that they could see. First, gold is to be acquired. It is spiritual gold. This gold is the golden character of Christ. It is attained by enduring the fires of persecution which results from standing for the faith. In his first epistle, Peter encourages the believer that our eternal inheritance is assured because we have been birthed into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He goes on to explain:

> *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith -of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*
>
> —1Peter 1:6-7

Second, white clothes are to be purchased to cover nakedness. Outward nakedness is symbolic of inner sin. White garments symbolize the righteousness of Christ which is imputed by faith in his atoning work on the cross. Our fine, white, linen garments of righteousness were purchased by the blood of the Lamb. The church is not only to take an obvious stand for the faith, but also witness through a demonstration of Christ-like purity and character. Paul writes to the church at Corinth that he does not need letters of recommendation to or from them because:

> *You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*
>
> —2Corinthians 3:2-3

Under the Old Covenant, the commandments of God were written on tablets of stone (Ex 24:12). But under the New Covenant, by grace God has written his law on our hearts and in our minds (Jer 31:33). We are then, as living epistles, to walk robed in righteous garments of white (symbolic of purity) and live out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The third purchase speaks of eye salve. Laodicean physicians followed the teachings of Herophilos who, on the principle that compound diseases required compound medicines, began a system of heterogeneous mixtures. Two of the most famous were an ointment from spice nard for the ears, and an eye salve made from *Phrygian powder* mixed with oil. The Lord chastises the Laodicean church that had put their trust in the remedies of men for physical healing but had forgotten that the arm of flesh cannot save. They were to turn to him and cure their spiritual blindness.

> *Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*
>
> —Revelation 3:19-22

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. This is not an apostate church as claimed by those who hold to the pretribulation rapture theory. The doctrinal premise for the pretribulation rapture is that each of the seven churches represent a dispensational time period in history. The first church in Ephesus was the apostolic or original church; the second church in Smyrna represents the persecuted church of the first century and so on. They then conjecture that the church to be raptured out before the tribulation is the sixth church listed - the faithful church in Philadelphia. The seventh and last church period is marked by the great apostasy. According to Clarence Larkin,

> *The character of the Church today is Laodicean, and as the Laodicean Period is to continue until the Church of the "New-Born" is taken out, we cannot hope for any great change until the Lord comes back.*
>
> —Dispensational Truth, p.132

The end of the age is to be marked by a great falling away or rebellion within the so-called professing church.

> *At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold...*
>
> —Matthew 24:10-12

> *Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.*
>
> —2 Thessalonians 2:3

> *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*
>
> —1 Timothy 4:1

The church in Laodicea is not rebuked for heresy but for confidence in worldly riches. Yet, the Lord demonstrates that they are truly his because he rebukes and disciplines those he loves. Today the Lord is chastising the western church for its confidence in the stock market, annuities and other financial instruments, but at the

same time, there are literally millions of Christians in Muslim and communistic countries around the world who are suffering for their faith in Christ and being persecuted for righteousness sake.

REVELATION 4:1-11
AROUND THE THRONE

Revelation 4:1-2

> *After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this. "At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it."*

THE *BOOK OF Revelation* contains the written record of four visions that the Apostle John had witnessed while in exile on the island of Patmos. Each of these visions is introduced by the phrase, *I was in the Spirit.* The first of the visions centers on the Lord Jesus Christ and his evaluation of the spiritual condition of the seven churches in Asia Minor (1:9-3:22). The third of the series of visions concerns judgment and renewal (17:1-21:8). The final vision describes the New Jerusalem (21:9-22:5). The second and longest of the visions begins in chapter four of the Book of Revelation and opens with a scene of the heavenly throne room.

The focus of the second vision is the Lamb who has been found worthy to open the scroll, and the revealing of the scroll's contents as it is unsealed (4:1-16:21). The prophesied events that are revealed have been ordained by God. These are things that must take place. The end of the age will come to a close in accordance with God's

will. A time of unparalleled distress is necessary to complete God's purposes. It is His will that the church be purified, Israel come to repentance, and the wicked continue to do wickedly (Daniel 12:10). Jesus is to sit at the right hand of the Father until the Father makes his enemies a footstool for his feet (Hebrews 1:13). The elect have been given foreknowledge of end time events so that they will be encouraged to stand firm to the end. Christ will return for the elect, but the church will first be purified in the fires of persecution.

Revelation 4:3

And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian.
A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne
And the *one who sat* there *had* the *appearance of jasper and carnelian...*

Jasper is opaque, highly colored quartz. It is usually blue, green, or rose. Carnelian is a reddish variety of chalcedony. Chalcedony is a milky, translucent type of quartz.

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see...

—1 Timothy 6:15b-16

Red, blue, and green are the primary colors of white light. The appearance of the One on the throne was like a brilliant, faceted gem. He was unlike a precious gem that simply reflects light, he was the source of the light. From the One on the throne radiated the primary colors of red, blue, and green light which comprised the perfect white light of his glory. John simply says that someone was sitting on the throne. John was unable to identify the person on the throne because of the radiance of his glory.

The rainbow over the throne was like an emerald. The rainbow bears witness of God the Creator who rules the elements.

"Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

—Mark 4:41b

Emeralds are green. Green plants produce food and are the foundation of the food chain that sustains all animal life. Our God not only created all things, but sustains all things.

> *The son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*
>
> —Hebrews 1:3a

Finally, the rainbow is a symbol of God's faithfulness to keep his covenants.

Genesis 9:13

> *I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.*

Revelation 4:4-6

> *Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.*

We find the Greek word *presbuteros* translated as *elder* or *presbyter* in our modern day English translations of the New Testament. In Old Testament times, scrolls and other written records of tribal customs and history were scarce. Oral tradition was important for preserving the historical record. Family patriarchs were esteemed for their matured wisdom, knowledge, and practical experience. The eldest male headed the family and exercised unquestioned authority over the junior members of the family. Elders also filled the official offices of the community at large. The term *elder* became synonymous with the office itself.

The twenty-four elders occupy an important position in the heavenly community. Their title of elder; the fact that they sit on thrones and wear crowns and their close proximity to the throne of God evidence the fact that they have been given certain authority by God.

Many of those who hold to a pretribulational view of the rapture identify the twenty-four as the leaders of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. They claim that the resurrection of the righteous has occurred and that the righteous dead have received their crowns having been judged for reward. I believe that this interpretation is incorrect based upon the following scriptural evidences:

1. Matthew 19:28 records a promise that Jesus made to his apostles. The apostles were astonished to learn how difficult it would be for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, since a young man of great wealth refused to sell what he had to follow Jesus. The apostles had left everything to follow the Master and they said, "*What then will be for us?*" In response to their question Jesus said:

> *"I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*
>
> —Matthew 19:28

Revelation chapter four is a picture of twenty-four thrones not twelve thrones. The scene does not take place on the earth during the millennial reign of Christ, but in the heavenlies. The twenty-four are not judging Israel but are worshipping God.

2. If John saw twelve tribal chieftains and the twelve apostles, he most likely would have identified them. John does identify the twelve tribes of Israel by name in chapter seven of Revelation (Rev 7:4-8). He also records that the names of the twelve tribes are written on the gates of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:12). In Revelation 21:14 we find that the names of the twelve apostles are written on the twelve foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem. These twenty-four are simply referred to as elders.

Exodus 25:9

> *Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.*

Hebrews 8:5

> *They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."*
>
> —Exodus 25:40

Everything in the earthly tabernacle was patterned after the preexisting heavenly Temple. Did this pattern only encompass the utensils and furnishings of the tabernacle?

1 Chronicles 24:1-4

> *These were the divisions of the sons of Aaron:*
>
> *The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father did, and they had no sons; so Eleazar and Ithamar served as the priests. With the help of Zadok a descendant of Eleazar and Ahimelech a descendant of Ithamar, David separated them into divisions for their appointed order of ministering. A larger number of leaders were found among Eleazar's descendants than among Ithamar's, and they were divided accordingly: sixteen heads of families from Eleazar's descendants and eight heads of families from Ithamar's descendants.*

After Moses received the Torah by the hand of God, his brother Aaron was ordained as High Priest. Aaron had four sons. His oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, were struck dead for offering profane fire before the LORD. Nadab and Abihu had no sons of their own. Aaron's surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, served as priests. They and their male descendants after them served as priests before the LORD from the time that Israel wandered in the wilderness until the time of King David. There were a total of twenty-four heads of families from the tribe of Levi during the days of King David's reign. The regulation of twenty-four courses of priests rotating to minister in the Tabernacle was established in the days when Solomon had the Temple constructed and continued to be observed until the Second Temple was destroyed by Rome in A.D. 70.

1 Chronicles: 24:19

This was their appointed order of ministering when they entered the temple of the LORD, according to the regulations prescribed for them by their forefather Aaron, as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded him.

This appointed order of ministering by rotating among twenty-four priests was commanded by the LORD. When Aaron received the regulations concerning the duties of the Levites, he wrote them down. Generations later, during the time of King David, the tribe of Levi had grown to twenty-four clans. The heads of these tribes served as priests in the Temple according to God's commandment.

Revelation 4:4

Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders.

3. The twenty-four courses of priests serving in the earthly Temple were patterned after the twenty-four priests who minister in the heavenly sanctuary.

Revelation 3:21

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

The promise for those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony is to sit on the Father's throne.

4. When the saints are glorified at the rapture, they will not be sitting on 24 thrones around the Father's throne, they will be sitting on the Father's throne.

In chapter five of the *Book of Revelation,* the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are singing of the worthy Lamb.

Revelation 5:8-10

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and

golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

The Authorized Version (King James) is in error in the translation of this passage. Note the four beasts (four living creatures or Cherubim) and the twenty four elders sung a new song saying that thou hast redeemed us to God. There is no redemption of angels. The NIV reads:

And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,

5. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are not singing of their own redemption. They are singing of the redemption of the Church the Bride of Christ. I believe that the twenty-four are angelic beings. They are not glorified saints. The saints are persecuted and martyred during the time of great distress and are not raptured out until the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

The *sea of glass* is not a churning sea, but a serene body as clear as crystal.

But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

—Isaiah 7:20-21

The glory of the heavenly throne is reflected in a crystal sea. There is no place for the wicked sea of humanity in heaven. They will spend eternity without rest or peace. But the righteous in Christ will be invited to enter into God's eternal rest and abide in perfect peace. They, like the crystal sea, will reflect the glory of the One who is seated on the throne.

Revelation 4:7-11

> *The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

The angelic chorus sings of God the Creator. He is worthy to receive glory and honor and power, for He has created all things. The four living creatures depict the created order. By the will of God all things were created and have their being. These beings represent life on earth. The number four is the number of creation. Four follows three, which is the number of the Trinity. After God, comes his creative works. Four is the number of the elements - earth, air, fire, and water. Four is the number of the regions or corners of the earth - north, south, east, and west. There are four seasons - spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

Each of the living creatures resembles an order of living beings. The lion represents the wild beasts. The ox represents the domestic animals. The eagle represents the birds of the air. The living creature that looked like a man represents mankind.

The four living creatures also symbolize Jesus the Messiah. John says that the first "living creature" was like a lion. The lion is the "king of the beasts" and represents majesty. Christ is portrayed in the Gospel of Mathew as the "King of Kings". The ox is a "beast of burden" – a servant animal. Oxen were also sacrificial animals. Mark in his Gospel presents Jesus as the suffering servant who was sacrificed for our sins. The third creature had a face like a man. The Gospel of Luke presents Christ as the Son of Man. The fourth living creature was "like a flying eagle". The eagle is swift, flies high and nests in inaccessible rocks. The eagle symbolizes divine help that comes from

above the earth. This living creature represents Christ in all his deity. The Gospel of John emphasizes Jesus as the Son of God.

The Trinity or Godhead is one God in three persons (1 + 3). There is one living creature that represents mankind, and three living creatures that represent the animal kingdom (1 + 3). The Spirit brings glory to the Son and the Son magnifies the Father. The Trinity is not one person, plus one person, plus one person. One times one times one equals one. The Trinity is one God in three persons. The angelic choir cries, *"Holy, holy, holy"*. God the Father is holy. Jesus the Son of God is holy. God the Spirit is holy. The Godhead is one holy God in three holy persons.

REVELATION 5:1-14
HE WILL STRIKE THE NATIONS

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

—Revelation 5:1-4

ANCIENT DOCUMENTS WERE sealed to protect the contents and to verify their authenticity. Scrolls would be rolled, while shorter official papers would be folded. Then they would be tied and knotted. A lump of clay or softened wax would be put over the knot. The author of the document would then press into the hardening clay or wax with his signet ring or roll into the material with his cylinder seal. The receiver of the document could be assured that the contents had not been tampered with and that the document was authentic by the unbroken seal. The seal of a king, governor or other ruler signified all the authority and power of the realm. This scroll was sealed with seven seals. Seven is the number of heavenly perfection. The seven seals signify that the ultimate authority and absolute power of God himself has both ordained the contents of the scroll, as well as, have insured that the scroll remains sealed until the one who is worthy opens it.

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of great distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then ... But you Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end...

—Daniel 12:1a,4a

At that time is an idiom that refers to the time of *great distress*. Jesus tells us that this period of time is characterized by the *abomination that causes desolation* (Mt 24:15; Mk 13:14; Lk 21:20). Daniel's sealed scroll was to be sealed until the time of the end. In the last days, the scroll will be unsealed to reveal prophesies that concern the seven year period that will precede the return of Christ. This time period is often referred to as the *Great Tribulation*, although it is more accurate to refer to the second half of the seven year period (3½ years or 42 months or 1260 days) as the time of the Great Tribulation.

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It is only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams.

—Acts 2:14-17

The last days began after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. John, the last surviving original apostle, was commanded to write down the contents of the visions that he had witnessed while he was in the Spirit. The prophetic, symbolic visions that were sealed in Daniel's day concerned the last days of this evil age which began at Pentecost and culminate with the Great Tribulation and the return of Christ to rule on earth.

Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

—Revelation 5:5

Just prior to Jacob's death, he gathered his sons to bless them individually and prophesy over them. Reuben, his firstborn, forfeited his birthright because he slept with Jacob's concubine Bilhah, who was Rachel's servant. Simeon and Levi, who were Jacob's second and third born sons, also forfeited their opportunity to the birthright when they killed every male in a Hivite city and plundered the city as an act of revenge for the rape of their sister Dinah by Shechem. The birthright was then given to the Jacob's fourth son Judah.

> *You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness - who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*
>
> —Genesis 49:9-10

In biblical times, a ruler exerted authority over his dominion because he wielded the scepter.

> *All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law; that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life...*
>
> —Esther 4:11

The scepter represented the king's authority to kill or spare a subject. The Jews, up until the time of Caesar Augustus, had authority to issue and carry out a death sentence by stoning. Under the Roman occupation of Palestine, they no longer had the authority to put a convicted criminal to death. That is why the Jews, after declaring Jesus guilty of blasphemy, sought after Pilot to issue the order to crucify Christ. The scepter had departed from Judah because Jesus was born. It passed to the One to whom it belonged.

> *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.*
>
> —Psalm 2:8

During the millennial reign of Christ, the obedience of the nations shall be his. He will rule over his enemies with a rod of iron.

> *Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*
>
> —Revelation 5:6-10

Jesus is worthy because he defeated death and the grave. He purchased men for God with his atoning blood. He, who was without sin, became a sin offering; so that, sinful humankind from every tribe and language and people and nation would become the righteousness of God in Christ. We have become a kingdom and a priesthood to serve our God and reign <u>on the earth</u>. This is not a symbolic or spiritual kingdom over which we reign, but the literal earthly millennial kingdom.

> *In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep.*
>
> —Daniel 2:1

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon was troubled by his dreams. The interpretation and meaning of one particular dream was so important to him that he issued the following decree:

> *The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. But if*

you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me."
—Daniel 2:5-6

Not only did he seek the meaning of his dream but the king challenged the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers he had summonsed to tell him "what" he had dreamed.

The astrologers answered the king, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men. "This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon.
—Daniel 2:10-12

Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon. Daniel first spoke wisely with Arioch and went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him. Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from God concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision.

"You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.
—Daniel 2:31-35

We understand from Daniel's interpretation of the dream and from its historic fulfillment that this dream was a prophetic picture of the chronology of the worldly, evil empires of the earth which would rule over the children of Israel until the end of this evil age. The head of bronze represented the Babylonian Empire; the chest and arms of silver foreshadowed the coming of the Medes and the Persians who were to rule next; the belly and the thighs of bronze were pictures of the Empire of the Greeks; the legs of iron symbolized the Roman Empire and finally the feet of iron and clay portrayed the last of the earthly empires – the dominion of the Antichrist.

Those Christian theologians who would deny an actual earthly millennial reign of Christ claim that the apocalyptic images of the Book of Revelation are purely symbolic. But half of the Book of Daniel is also apocalyptic literature with images of great beasts as well as the huge and formidable statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Every portion of the statue was symbolic. But each symbol represented an actual empire and nation of people who existed and ruled for a time on the earth. The rock that struck and destroyed the statue is Christ. When Jesus returns he will come with a rod of iron to strike the nations. The rock became a huge mountain that filled the earth. The reign of Christ will be a literal, earthly, worldwide reign. And those who were purchased by his blood for God will rule and reign with him for a thousand years.

> *Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"*
>
> —Revelation 5:11-12

There are a vast multitude of angels, along with the living creatures, and the elders who are giving glory to the lamb. There is no mention of glorified saints, because the rapture does not take place before the opening of the seals and the Great Tribulation. This is a heavenly chorus singing the praises of the Lamb and the song of redemption. There is great rejoicing in the heavenlies because men

and women, who were created in the image and likeness of God, have been reconciled back to their maker.

> *Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!" The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.*
>
> —Revelation 5:13-14

> *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*
>
> —Romans 8:22

The whole of creation, both animate and inanimate, is like a woman in the pains of childbirth groaning in expectancy of delivery. This delivery is from the bondage of decay and death which resulted from the *Fall* and the *Curse* on the created order. What an incredible contrast between creation's groaning due to the agony of sin and corruption, as compared with, the singing and jubilation of creation wrought by the victory of the cross!

> *"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!"*

And let all of God's people say, AMEN!

REVELATION 6:1-17
THE FIRST SIX SEALS

Revelation 6:1

I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!"

Daniel 12:4

But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

Acts 2:16-17

No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

THE LAST DAYS began at Pentecost and continue until the return of Christ. The seals that are opened reveal what was written concerning the period of time from the birth of the church until the rapture of the church at the 7th trumpet.

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

—Matthew 24:3-14

The parallel accounts found in Matthew 24-25, Luke 21 and Mark 13 of the Olivet Discourse give details as to the prophetic signs that precede the Second Coming of Christ. The four major signs that mark the "Beginning of Birth Pains" – False Christs, War and Rumor of Wars, Famine and Earthquakes, Persecution and Death are also the descriptions of the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."

Revelation 6:2

I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

Opening the first seal reveals a rider on a white horse, holding a bow, given a crown and bent on conquest. Christ was given all power and authority at the resurrection. This rider was given a crown (stephanos) which is a sign of authority. He did not already possess authority. It was not a king's crown (diadem) that he received. Although the rider has the appearance of Christ and as a man of peace (no arrow in his bow), he is bent on conquest. This seal parallels the 1st prophecy of the Olivet Discourse that false christs would soon arise after the ascension of Jesus into the heavens.

Satan comes as an angel of light. The Antichrist seems to be a man of peace.

Zechariah 6:1-6

I looked up again—and there before me were four chariots coming out from between two mountains—mountains of bronze! The first chariot had red horses, the second black, the third white, and the fourth dappled—all of them powerful. I asked the angel who was speaking to me, "What are these, my lord?" The angel answered me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. The one with the black horses is going toward the north country, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south."

Four Horses/four directions:

White/West; Red/East; Black/North; Dappled/South

Jerusalem is the geographic center of God's prophetic plan. The first horseman of the Apocalypse comes from a region west of Israel – Europe (the former Roman Empire).

Daniel 7:7-8

"After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

"While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

The fourth beast was terrifying and very powerful. That beast (gentile nation) was Rome. The ten horns parallel the ten toes of the great statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The little horn (Antichrist) came up from among the ten horns and uprooted three of them. The Western European Union was founded in 1955 and reactivated by The Rome Declaration in 1984. Although there are 28 delegations there are only ten member states: Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Netherlands,

Germany, Portugal, Greece, Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom. This ten state confederacy is the core of the European Union – the revived Roman Empire. The Antichrist will emerge from the west and have unchallenged power given to him by a ten nation confederacy.

Revelation 6:3-4

When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.

Opening the 2nd seal unleashes a rider who is empowered to take peace from the earth and carries a large sword. There have been over 14,000 wars during the last 5,500 years of recorded history. On the average, there have been 2-3 wars per year worldwide. Today, there are two dozen wars being fought around the globe – or ten times the average number of wars fought since recorded history. There have been over 148 wars fought since WWII. Remember WWI was the war to end all wars.

The red horse comes from the east. Israel is in the Middle East. This rider emerges from the Far East. The 2nd seal parallels the prophecy of Jesus concerning wars between nations and kingdoms.

Revelation 16:12

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.

Revelation 9:13-16

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

The prophecies of Revelation proclaim that there will be armies from east of Israel that will march over the dry bed of the Euphrates

River. A system of dams is in place that can literally dry up the bed of the Euphrates River. In his diary, Mao Tse-tung bragged that with a population in excess of 1 billion people, he could raise an army of 200 million soldiers. Between abortion and window babies (population control in China limits a family to only 1 child), there are a great many boys being born to carry on the family name; while, girls are aborted or left to die after birth. The result is a country of millions of men without women to court and marry.

Revelation 6:5-6

> *When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"*

The 3rd seal is broken and a rider on a black horse emerges. This seal parallels Jesus' prophecy of famine. A man works an entire day to pay the price of a loaf of bread. This horse is from the north. Russia has long lines of people waiting to purchase food which is scarce. The government workers and military often are not paid for weeks and even months.

Barley and wheat symbolize Christ and his church. Oil and wine symbolize the Holy Spirit. As many saints are persecuted unto death (the wheat is rare), the Holy Spirit is being poured out (the oil and wine are not damaged). Great persecution results in great revival. "But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread..." Exodus 1:12a.

Revelation 6:7-8

> *When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.*

The continent of Africa is south of Israel. In Rwanda millions were hacked to death although we live in an age of firearms. Famine and plague (A.I.D.S. epidemic) have rendered entire villages desolate.

Revelation 6:9-11

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

They maintained their testimony. They were not new converts. They were told to wait until the number of those who were to be killed was completed. This seal parallels the warning by Jesus that the followers of Christ will be hated by all nations.

The white robes given to the saints waiting under the altar symbolized the imputed righteousness of Christ (white symbolizes purity/sinlessness). The robes were to comfort them as they waited. The rapture could not have taken place because the full number had not as of yet, come in.

Romans 11:25-27

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Israel will experience a hardening in part until the church is raptured. Israel's deliverance does not occur after the time of great distress. The full number of Gentiles comes in and then Christ returns with the church to deliver Israel.

Revelation 6:12-14

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned

blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place

Again we parallel the events depicted in Revelation to the words Jesus spoke on the Mount of Olives concerning the sign of his coming.

Matthew 24:29-31

"Immediately after the distress of those days," 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Immediately after the distress of those days:

1. The sun is darkened
2. The moon will not give its light
3. The stars will fall from the sky (asteroids/shooting stars)

At that time:

1. They will see the Son of Man in great glory
2. He will send his angels to gather the elect

The account in the Gospel of Luke tells us that there will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. Men will faint from terror. *At that time* they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud. *When these things begin to take place* stand up and lift up your heads, *because* your redemption is drawing near.

The signs of the coming of the Son of Man take place after the distress of those days (the Great Tribulation). The gathering of the elect by the holy angels takes place after a time of great persecution marked by the prophesied signs appearing in the heavens.

Revelation 6:15-17

> *Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

After the 6th seal, the time frame parallels the great and terrible day of the LORD. It is the day that the saints are gathered from the four winds as God pours out his wrath upon the earth. The seals have been opened so that we can view what was written beforehand concerning both the last days (church age) and specific events of the 70th week (7 years) of Daniel. The people of the earth will be exceedingly violent (As it was in the days of Noah) and exceedingly promiscuous (As it was in Sodom and Gomorrah). It will be a time when, in Jerusalem, people will be proclaiming "peace, peace" when there is no peace. At that time a man will be embraced by the world because he is a charismatic man of peace. There will be a one-world government, a universal false religion and the 3rd temple will be built with the sacrificial system reinstated.

1st Half (42 months, 1260 days, 3 ½ years)	Mid-Tribulation	2nd Half (42 months, 1260 days, 3 ½ years)
Temple Rebuilt	Sacrifices Cease	144,000 in Hiding
False Peace	Image Erected	Saints Persecuted

Jesus related in detail the events to take place to his disciples (those who would later serve as the apostles of the church). The information was given to the followers of Christ and recorded in the Bible. I believe that we are told beforehand the events of the end times in order to encourage us and help strengthen our resolve to remain firm until the end in spite of persecution.

REVELATION 7:1-17
WHO ARE THE 144,000?

Revelation 7:1-3

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."

AFTER THIS (THE vision of the heavenly choruses of praise), John saw 4 angels standing at the 4 corners of the earth holding back the 4 winds. Four is the number that represents the created order. The sun, moon, and stars were created on the 4th day to serve as signs to mark seasons, and days, and years. After the infinite Trinity (3) comes the created order (3+1 = 4). After the sun turns black (as sackcloth), the moon turns red (as blood), and the stars fall to earth, the servants of God are to be sealed with a spiritual mark of protection on their foreheads. The atmosphere will be so filled with smoke, blood and ashes that the light of the sun and moon will hardly pierce the sky. The word in the Greek that has been translated as stars is "aster." I believe that the stars that fall to earth

are both spiritual stars, fallen stars or demons as well as physical, celestial objects such as asteroids or meteorites.

Genesis 4:15b reads: *Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him."* After the sixth seal is opened, there are signs in the heavens of the return of Christ and the servants of God (not the elect or church), are sealed as a sign of God's protection. The 144,000 are sealed prior to the trumpet judgments which will impact the land and the sea, as well as, those who have taken the mark of the beast.

Ezekiel 9:1-6

> *Then I heard him call out in a loud voice, "Bring the guards of the city here, each with a weapon in his hand." And I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with a deadly weapon in his hand. With them was a man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side. They came in and stood beside the bronze altar. Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." As I listened, he said to the others, "Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were in front of the temple.*

The city is Jerusalem. The man clothed in linen is a picture of the high priest, who on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), removes his ornate garments and puts on linen: linen tunic, linen undergarments, linen sash, and a linen turban (Lev 16:4). Jesus, our high priest in the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6), took off his garments of glory and put on the common garments of frail humanity (Php 2:6-7). The fullness of the deity dwelled among us in bodily form (Col 2:9). The man in linen of Ezekiel 9 was to place a mark on the forehead of those who grieve and lament over the detestable practices taking place in the temple (idol worship/spiritual adultery); so that, they would be spared from the sword of judgment. In the same manner, those who

flee the temple in the time of the Antichrist (make desolate) because of the abomination there (image of the beast), shall be saved from the coming trumpet and bowl judgments. Because of the blood shed on the temple mount, it must be ceremonially cleansed (Nu 19:2-6). Before the sacrifices resume and the third temple is built, there must be a red heifer sacrificed. The tribulation temple must also be cleansed and rededicated before Jesus takes up residence in the Holy of Holies during the Millennium.

2 Corinthians 1:21b-22

. *He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come.* All born again believers have the seal of God's ownership set on them at the time of their regeneration. The 144,000 servants of God, at the time of the setting of God's seal upon their foreheads, have not been regenerated by God's Spirit. If would have already set his seal of ownership on them.

Revelation 7:4-8

> *Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.*

Judah - Praise Him!
Reuben - He has seen my misery.
Gad - Now, I have good fortune
Asher - and happiness.
Manasseh - My struggle
Naphtali - I have forgotten.
Simeon - One who hears
Levi - will become part of me.
Issachar - Reward
Zebulum - and honor

Joseph - may He add
Benjamin - to the Son of my right hand.

The tribe of Dan is not listed. The Danites were disobedient to the LORD's command to possess their allotted portion of the Promised Land (Jdg 18:27-31), and they continued in idolatry until the time of the Assyrian captivity. Jacob's blessing over his children includes a prophetic description of Dan as a serpent and a viper that bites the horse's heels causing the rider to tumble backwards (Gen 49:16-17). Deuteronomy 33:22 contains the account of Moses' prophetic blessing of Dan which describes Dan as a lion's cub springing out of Bashan. Psalm 22 is a Messianic Psalm which describes the future crucifixion. Verses 12-13 is a symbolic picture of the enemies of Christ: ... *strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions tearing at their prey*.... Dan is described as a serpent and a roaring lion seeking to devour. Antiochus Epiphanes, a type of Antichrist, was a Selucid King (Greek ruler of Syria). The city of Dan is the northernmost city in Israel, just below the Syrian border. Idolatry marks the worship of the beast and the Danites were idol worshippers. Based on these facts concerning the tribe of Dan, It is speculated that the Antichrist may be a Danite. In any case, the tribe of Dan is excluded from the listing of those who were sealed from all the tribes of Israel.

"The LORD spoke to Moses... He said: *Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing* every *man by name, one by one*" (Nu 1:1-2). The first time the LORD commanded that a census of Israel be taken, only men were counted and their names were written down on a list. More than thirty eight years later, the LORD directed that a second census of the nation be taken. "After the plague the LORD said to Moses and Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest, "*Take a census of the whole Israelite community by families - all those twenty years old or more who are able to serve in the army of Israel*" (Nu 26:1-2). Only men who were twenty years or older qualified to serve in the army of Israel. The number *144,000* is the sum total resulting from a census of the whole Israelite community by their tribes counting the men who are of fighting age – 20 years or older.

Commentators disagree on the identity of the 144,000 based upon their mode of theology. Those who do not believe in a literal

interpretation of these passages, claim that the 144,000 represent the church. Therefore they believe that this group is comprised of men and women, boys and girls. There are also doctrinal disagreements concerning celibacy, whether or not the 144,000 are physical virgins or spiritual virgins as well as their ethnicity and state of salvation.

Those who hold to the view that the Book of Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. are known as preterists. They hold to the belief that the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled during the reign of Emperor Nero. Gentry states, "…. the preterist view does understand Revelation's prophecies as strongly reflecting actual historical events in John's near future, though they are set in apocalyptic drama and clothed in poetic hyperbole" (Pate 1998, p.38). Therefore Gentry identifies the 144,000 as a literal historic group, although he views the number 144,000 as symbolic. "… these *'servants of God' from the 'twelve tribes of Israel'* (7:4-8) are racial Jews who accept the Lamb of God for salvation (they later appear with him on Mount Zion, 14:1-5) (Ibid., pp.56-57). The preterist identifies the 144,000 as Jewish Christians who escaped from Judea when the Roman generals Vespasian and Titus withdrew to Rome after Emperor Nero's suicide.

There are several arguments which prove that the Book of Revelation was written in 95 or 96 A.D., a quarter of a century after the Fall of Jerusalem:

The persecution of Christians during the reign of Nero was centered in Rome (A.D. 64). According to the account found in Revelation 2:13, Antipas was martyred in Pergamum, which was located in Western Asia (modern-day Turkey). The persecution of Christians who failed to worship the reigning emperor (the emperor cult), did not reach Western Asia until the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96).

> *Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.*
>
> —2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

Nero never even visited the temple in Jerusalem. When revolts broke out in Judea and Jerusalem; Emperor Nero went to Greece on a pleasure trip, while Vespasian campaigned in Judea against the Jews.

The term a synagogue of Satan is used in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9. While followers of Christ were still considered a sect of Judaism by the Romans, they enjoyed freedom to worship under Roman rule. During the siege of Jerusalem, Jewish Christians heeding the warnings of Jesus escaped from Judea when the Roman generals Vespasian and Titus withdrew to Rome after Emperor Nero's suicide. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., non-believing Jews who were angered that the Jewish Christians fled from the Holy City, took the names of Jewish followers of Christ off of their synagogue rolls and turned the names into the Roman authorities. The Christian Jews were no longer protected from observing emperor worship and many were martyred. The synagogues of Satan did not arise until after the Fall of Jerusalem.

In the year 95 A.D., John the Apostle was apprehended by the proconsul of Asia and sent to Rome. Emperor Domitian banished John to the isle of Patmos. The tyrant Domitian was slain in September of A.D. 96. All of his edicts and public acts were declared void by a decree of the Roman Senate on account of his excessive cruelty; and his successor, Nerva, recalled all those whom he had banished. The Apostle John returned to Ephesus in A.D. 97 where he became bishop.

Therefore it can be reasonably concluded that the Book of Revelation was written after the Fall of Jerusalem and there are prophecies yet to be fulfilled including a future sealing of the 144,000.

Pate (a progressive dispensationalist) and Thomas (a classical dispensationalist) identify the 144,000 as Jewish Christians converted during the Great Tribulation (Ibid., pp. 165, 218). Gentry views the 144,000 as Jewish Christians of the first century, while Pate and Thomas view the 144,000 as Jewish Christians yet to be converted during the Great Tribulation.

The pretribulational view based on Dispensational Theology has the church raptured out before the time of great distress and no believer is left on earth to spread the gospel. Therefore, they need not only to identify the 144,000 as Jewish believers but they claim that they are super-evangelists (144,000 Billy Grahams).

First, the 144,000 are sealed on their foreheads to be identified spiritually as belonging to and being protected by God. If these were already born-again believers in Christ as per the pretribulational viewpoint, they would already have been sealed. Second, the biblical seal, or mark, can protect those who refuse idolatry. The image of the beast in the temple will provoke the Lord to jealousy (Exodus 20:5) and result in the outpouring of His wrath upon the earth. Believers in Jesus Christ will not suffer God's coming wrath. The 144,000 are sealed, protecting them from the coming wrath, just as a faithful remnant were marked in Ezekiel 9, saved from the judgment then to come. If the 144,000 were already in Christ as believers, as in the pretribulational view, they would not need what would then be a second sealing in Revelation 7 because they would already be exempted from God's wrath. Thirdly, how can the 144,000 evangelize if they follow a false Messiah (the Antichrist) for the first half of the Great Tribulation and then are in hiding in a place prepared in the desert (probably Petra) during the second half of the Great Tribulation?

Covenant theology views the church as the true Israel of God. "... the church has now become the true Israel of God and will receive all the blessings promised to Israel in the Old Testament..." (Grudem, pg. 863). The Reformed theologian is prohibited from approaching New Testament scriptural passages concerning Israel with a literal hermeneutic because of the presupposition that the church is the new Israel. Pate offers the following evidences from the New Testament that serve to distinguish Israel from the church: "(a) There is no clear-cut example of the church being called Israel in the New Testament or in the church fathers before A.D. 160. (b) The most natural meaning for the term Israel in both Old and New Testament is the physical descendents of the patriarchs. (c) A distinction between ethnic Israel and the church is amply attested to in Romans 9-11. (d) Moving from the exegetical data to the level of theological consideration, it seems that the purpose of the Great Tribulation is to win the nation of Israel to its Messiah (Pate, p.164-165).

James 1:1 is often quoted to bolster the position that the term *twelve tribes* no longer refers to ethnic Jews but is a reference to the church. "..., James can write a general letter to many early Christian churches and say that he is writing *To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion*

(James 1:1). This indicates that he is evidently viewing the New Testament Christians as the successors to and fulfillment of the twelve tribes of Israel" (Grudem, p.862). Evidently, James was writing to New Testament Christians - *Jewish Christians.* "Some hold that this expression refers to Christians in general, but the term *twelve tribes* would more naturally apply to Jewish Christians. Furthermore, a Jewish audience would be more in keeping with the obvious Jewish nature of the letter..." (The NIV Study Bible 1995, p.1878). James wrote this letter to Jewish Christians who were scattered to the nations. The members of the Jerusalem church fled from Judea after Stephen was martyred.

Several inconsistencies arise when the 144,000 are identified figuratively as the church: (1). *Those who did not defile themselves with women* (Rev 14:4b) are not identified as men, but as a group of men and women. (2). The 144,000 are offered as *firstfruits* to God and to the Lamb (Rev 14:4b). To then identify the 144,000 as the universal church, forces an unnatural interpretation of the term *first fruits* to mean the entire *wheat harvest.*

How does the description of the 144,000 help confirm that they are religious and not Messianic Jews? The 144,000 are described as "those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure" (Revelation 14:4a). Many interpret this description to mean that the 144,000 are celibates and virgins, either natural (never having had physical relations) or spiritual (never having been defiled by idolatry). I agree that the passage can be taken in the spiritual sense of purity. On the other hand, there is a natural interpretation to this passage when we understand that the 144,000 are unsaved Israelites. In order for these men to participate in the renewed temple worship and sacrifice, they would have to refrain from sexual relationships, even with their wives (according to Leviticus 15:16–17, an emission of semen renders a person ceremonially unclean). In the middle of the seven, sacrifice and offering are halted by the Antichrist. When they are told to bow before the image of the Antichrist, the eyes of these men are opened. They are then sealed to protect them from the coming judgment and they flee the temple. I therefore conclude that the 144,000 are the firstfruits of the harvest of souls from the nation of Israel. They are a group of ceremonially

undefiled men who observe the religious practices of Orthodox Judaism but are from all 12 tribes.

Revelation 7:9-12

> *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*
>
> *All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"*

After this I looked and before me was a great multitude... When did John see this great multitude in the heavenlies? After this: the opening of the sixth seal which revealed the signs in the sun, moon, and stars. These signs were prophesied by Jesus to occur before his return to gather the elect. The 144,000 are sealed to protect them from the judgments to come because they are not raptured with the church at the seventh trumpet. The multitude cries out that salvation belongs to our God. These are not the four living creatures, elders, or angels. These are the blood bought saints that appear in the heavenlies after the *distress of those days.*

Revelation 7:13-17

> *Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know."*
>
> *And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will*

lead them to springs of living water. .And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The first to the sixth seals reveal an overview of the last days. The symbolic vision spans from the birth of the church until its rapture. The sixth seal reveals the signs of the return of Christ and subsequent Rapture. *These are they who have come out of the great tribulation...* The focus here is the state of eternal glory and the rewards that await those who stand firm in their faith. This view of eternal bliss is revealed in order to encourage the church that must endure the refining fires of persecution. May we all have the eternal perspective of the Apostle Paul who said, "*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all* (2Cor 4:17)."

REVELATION 8:1-2
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRUMPETS

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

—Revelation 8:1

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

—Isaiah 53:7

AT THE FIRST Advent, the Lamb of God did not protest his innocence. Jesus could have called on the Father to dispatch twelve legions of angels to place at his disposal, but He did not. Falsely accused, mocked, and unjustly convicted, the Son of God laid down his life. The suffering servant Messiah was led like a lamb to the slaughter. The heavens were silent as Jesus agonized on the cross, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? – which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mt 27:46b). The silence of the Lamb proved that no one took his life. His silence evidenced that He willingly laid down his own life as a ransom for many. The silence of the Father demonstrated that it was the LORD'S will to make the life of the Son a guilt offering. The first coming of Christ was marked by silence in the heavens and the blood of the Lamb without blemish poured out upon the earth.

Now, nearly two thousand years later, the heavens again remain silent. With the Second Advent nearly at hand, the silence dramatically emphasizes the calm before the storm of judgment that will rain upon the earth. Unlike the first coming, the Second Advent does not portend the arrival of a suffering servant. Instead, the silence will be broken by the sounding of seven trumpets that announce the coming of the King of kings. He will tread out the winepress of God's wrath upon the earth. This time, at the second coming, the silence of heaven will be followed by the tormented screams of evil men as their blood will be poured out upon the earth.

> *And I saw the seven angels who stand before God and to them were given seven trumpets.*
>
> —Revelation 8:2

There were two types of wind instruments used by the nation of Israel which have been translated into the English language as the word, *trumpet.* These are the *two silver trumpets* (Nu 10:1-10), and the *ram's horn* or *shofar.* On the first day of the seventh month (Tishri), Israel was to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts (Lev 23:23-25; Nu 29:1-6). This feast, *The Feast of Trumpets,* is known today as *Rosh HaShana,* meaning the Head of the Year (the Jewish New Year). Rosh HaShana is the first day of the civil calendar. Rosh HaShana was first celebrated when the Jewish people returned to the Promised Land after 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

The religious calendar begins with the spring month of Nisan (Abib), as commanded by God (Ex 12:2). The first three Levitical festivals take place in the month of Nisan in the spring. The last three Levitical festivals take place in the fall in the month of Tishri. During Rosh HaShana, Genesis chapter 22 is read during the synagogue service. This is the account of Abraham being tested in his faith and found obedient. He was commanded by God to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering. As Abraham had lifted up his knife to slay his son, the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said:

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.

—Genesis 22:12

At that time Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. Abraham took the ram and sacrificed it in the place of his son. The shofar (ram's horn), is blown during the Feast of Trumpets in remembrance of the deliverance of Isaac. A burnt offering is both a voluntary act of worship and an atonement offering. The Bible teaches that the life of a creature is in its blood (Lev 17:11). The blood of a sacrificial animal is sprinkled upon an altar. This serves as a covering for sin. It is also a picture of the future substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. An animal's blood could only temporarily cover sin, it could not remove sin. To make atonement, is to satisfy a sin debt by paying the full price of sin. The wages of sin is death (separation from God). An animal's life is not equivalent to the life of a human being. Humans are the only creatures who were created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27).

God has preserved the account of the history of the nation of Israel as an example for the church (1 Co 10:6). An event in the natural realm is afforded to us first, so we can develop our spiritual understanding (1 Co 15:44-49). Chapter 22 of Genesis in the Old Testament paints a portrait of one of the most famous verses of Scripture found in the New Testament:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...

—John 3:16a

When Isaac saw the fire and wood for the burnt offering he asked his father, *"but where is the lamb?"* At that time a ram and not a lamb was provided. The place where this scene transpired was called, *The LORD Will Provide.* One day in the future, God himself would provide a lamb. Over two thousand years later, John was baptizing in the Jordan River when he saw Jesus and said:

Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

—John 1:29b

God himself provided the perfect lamb whose sacrifice would accomplish so much more than just temporarily cover sin. He gave His only begotten Son as an offering that would result in the remission of sin (remove sin because the debt of sin would be completely satisfied). The *Law of Moses* stipulated penalties for injury to another person: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and so forth (Ex 21:23-24). If Jesus were merely a man, His substitutionary sacrifice could pay the debt of only one other person. But Jesus who is fully both the Son of Man and the Son of God (Ro 1:3-4) is divine and of infinite worth. He was able to lay down His life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45).

> *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."*
>
> —Hebrews 11:17-18

Abraham had another son, Ishmael, by his wife's Egyptian handmaiden. The phrase, *one and only son*, is to emphasize the fact that only Isaac was the son of promise and rightful heir (Gen 15:4). Abraham had purposed in his heart to carry out God's command and offer up Isaac as an offering for sin. How then, could Abraham sacrifice his son; and yet, God fulfill His promise that through Isaac would Abraham's offspring be reckoned?

> *Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.*
>
> —Hebrews 11:19

Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and symbolically, Isaac was resurrected. This account gives us a prophetic picture of Christ's atoning death and resurrection. Seven hundred years before the incarnation of Christ (God being manifested in the form of human flesh), the prophet Isaiah speaks of the ministry, death, and resurrection of God's suffering servant (Messiah):

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.
—Isaiah 53:10

The blowing of the shofar, not only commemorates the testing of Abraham's faith; but also, is associated with the resurrection of the righteous (I Thes 4:15-16; Rev 20:4).

Israel was a divided kingdom after the reign of Solomon. The Northern Kingdom (Samaria), had been taken into captivity by Assyria (722-721 B.C.). The people of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) were taken into exile over a century later. After a period of seventy years, the exiles returned to Jerusalem in Judah and once again began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD.

The daily sacrifice commenced on the first day of the seventh month (Ezr 3:6). Psalm 90, verse 10 begins: *The length of our days is seventy years - ...* Symbolically, the nation was spiritually dead (separated from God), for a lifetime (70 years). When the exiles came out of sinful Babylon (a type of the world), the nation returned to the worship and presence of the LORD. This picture of the resurrection of the people of God took place on the Feast of Trumpets. Figuratively speaking, Isaac was raised from the dead. He is a type of Christ, the firstfruits of the resurrection of the righteous (1 Co 15:23). Centuries after the testing of Abraham, the Jews return to the land from 70 years of captivity. Figuratively speaking, Israel (a type of the church), is raised from the dead. These two events, which foreshadow resurrection, are both associated with the Feast of Trumpets.

According to the Lord's own word, we will tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ will rise first.
—I Thessalonians 4:15-16

There will be born again believers in Christ who will be physically alive at His coming. First, those believers who are asleep in Christ (died physically but are spiritually alive), will be resurrected from

the dead. Then those who are alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes 4:17). The Rapture (capturing out of the Elect), takes place immediately after the resurrection of the righteous dead at the sounding of the trumpet call of God (Mt 24:31).

Now we will direct our study to the purposes and use of the *silver trumpets*. The command of the LORD to Moses concerning the fashioning of the two silver trumpets is found in the book of Numbers, verses 1-10, of chapter 10. They were to be used for calling the community together and having the camps set out. When both silver trumpets were sounded, the whole community was to assemble before Moses at the Tent of Meeting (the tabernacle where God met with Israel). When both trumpets were sounded it signaled that all of the chosen people of God were to meet with God at His appointed time and place (Ex 29:43; Nu 10:3). The sounding of the trumpets was not only for the assembling of the people; but also, for marching, battle and festivals.

> *Also at your times of rejoicing your appointed feasts and New Moon festivals you are to sound the trumpets...*
>
> —Numbers 10:10a

> *Sound the ram's horn at the New Moon and when the moon is full, on the day of our Feast;*
>
> —Psalm 81:3

At the New Moon, when the first sliver of light is confirmed by two witnesses who announce the 1st day of the month, both the silver trumpets and the ram's horn were to be sounded.

> *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*
>
> —Matthew 24:36

No one will know what day or hour the Lord returns since the sun will be as sack cloth and the moon as blood. The atmosphere will be so thick with dust, smoke and ashes on the Day of the LORD that no one will be able to witness when the New Moon takes place.

Rosh HaShana takes place on the first day of the seventh month. In the seventh month, the New Moon Festival coincides with the Feast of Trumpets.

> *And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.*
>
> —Matthew 24:31

The silver trumpets announce the gathering of God's people before His presence. The blowing of the shofar is associated with the resurrection of the righteous. Both the silver trumpets and the ram's horn are sounded on the first day of the first month at the New Moon. The second time during the ceremonial calendar year that the trumpets sound is on the first day of the second month. The seventh time the trumpets are sounded is on the first day of the seventh month at Rosh HaShana - The Feast of Trumpets. I believe that there is strong evidence to support a position that at Rosh HaShana the seventh angel will sound his trumpet (Rev 10:7). Jesus Christ was resurrected on the Feast of Firstfruits. The Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost (Feast of Weeks). It logically can be deduced that the elect will be raptured on the Feast of Trumpets.

In chapter eight of the Book of Revelation seven angels are about to sound seven trumpets. Each of the first six trumpet blasts will mark the outpouring of a plague upon the earth. The seventh and last trumpet will announce the Rapture of the church as God pours out his bowls of wrath upon the earth.

REVELATION 8:2-9:12
SIX ANGELS SOUNDING SIX TRUMPETS

And saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

—Revelation 8:2

1 ENOCH 20:2-8 IDENTIFIES the names of the seven angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter the presence of the glory of the Holy One as: Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel, and Remiel. Only the archangels Michael and Gabriel are identified by name in the Protestant canon. Tradition associates Gabriel as the seventh angel whose trumpet blast will announce the return of Christ.

First Enoch is classified among the works of Apocalyptic literature. These works are written accounts of a revelation that is given by God through an otherworldly mediator to a human recipient disclosing future events. Other than the apocalyptic portions of the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the Book of Revelation (which were confirmed to be divinely inspired and truly prophetic), the Apocrypha (from the Greek *apokruphos*, "hidden" or "concealed") and Pseudepigrapha were collections of traditions and writings composed between the 4th century B.C. and the 2nd century A.D. The Pseudepigrapha (literally - false writings or forgeries) were intentionally but falsely attributed to famous biblical figures. Books such as *Tobit* or *Judith* (Old Testament Apocrypha) or the *Gospel*

of Thomas (New Testament Pseudepigrapha) contain historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms, are written in a mythical style, and teach doctrines which conflict with Scripture. Dan Brown who authored the DaVinci Code quotes from the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Phillip claiming that the backdrop to his novel was based on historical fact. The fact is that Leonardo DaVinci made many sketches before painting the Last Supper. DaVinci clearly identifies the disciple who is leaning on the chest of Jesus as John and not Mary Magdalene. There are no newly discovered Gospels, just ancient discarded forgeries.

Although books such as First & Second Maccabees contain valuable historical information concerning the period of time between the Old and New Testaments, no prophet of God spoke and no written record proclaims *thus sayeth the LORD*. The Catholic canon contains books which were written during a time when God was silent. The Qu'ran is written by a so-called prophet who did not speak one prophetic utterance nor perform a single miracle to attest that he was indeed a true prophet.

Revelation 8:3-5

> *Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.*

Just prior to the trumpet judgments, an angel is offering up the prayers of all the saints. If the church was raptured before the tribulation there would be no reason for an angel to be offering up the prayers of the saints.

1 Corinthians 13:12

> *Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

After the rapture, the bride of Christ will be speaking face to face with her bridegroom. There will be no need for an angel to offer up our prayers before God's throne.

After the period of ½ an hour of silence in the heavenlies, the silence is dramatically shattered by peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. The opening of the 7th seal reveals the portion of the scroll that contains specific details concerning the events of Daniel's 70th week. As the first six seals were opened an overview of the events associated with the church age were revealed: false Christs, war, famine, and pestilence. After the distress of those days (martyring of the saints), there are signs in the heavenlies followed by a great earthquake.

The First Six Seals Reveal:

1) False Christs
2) War
3) Famine
4) Pestilence and Wild Beasts
5) Martyrs
6) *Heavens Shaken* → *Earthquake*

SILENCE IN HEAVEN

The Seventh Seal:

7) *Heavens Shaken* → *Earthquake* → 7 Trumpets

The signs in the heavenlies and the great earthquake are reiterated at the opening of the seventh seal and at the seventh trumpet. The seals are an overview of the last days. Further details concerning the fate of the nations, Israel and the church will be provided. The seals, trumpets, and bowls contain an overlap of certain events. The martyrs revealed at the opening of the fifth seal are told to wait a little longer until the number of their brothers to be killed will be completed (Revelation 6:10-11). Therefore, it can logically be deduced that martyring of the saints will continue after the opening of the fifth seal (until the seventh trumpet).

Revelation 8:6-7

Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

Also at your times of rejoicing – your appointed feasts and New Moon festivals – you are to sound the trumpets...

—Numbers 10:10a

The 1st trumpet is sounded at the New Moon on the 1st month, Nisan. This season marks the Passover beginning on the 10th of Nisan when the lamb is selected. The lamb is slaughtered on the 14th at twilight. The Feast of Unleavened commences on the day of the Passover and continues for seven days. The Passover was instituted to commemorate the Exodus. The first trumpet plague is described as hail and fire mixed with blood. The plagues of Egypt included hail, flashes of lightning, and water turning to blood.

During the trumpet judgments, only a third of the earth and trees are burned up and a third of the living creatures in the sea die. While during the bowl judgments, every living thing in the sea dies and the rivers and springs turn to blood. I believe that since the saints are not raptured until the seventh trumpet, during the trumpet judgments God preserves two-thirds of the earth, trees and sea to provide for his saints. While during the outpouring of his wrath, those who shed the blood of the saints are given blood to drink.

Revelation 8:8-11

The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water—the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.

Second Trumpet:

Something like a huge mountain all ablaze could describe a meteor, comet or top of a volcano that is cast into the sea. The result is that a third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Third Trumpet:

The nuclear disaster of Chernobyl is not over. Chernobyl is a Ukrainian word that is translated into English as *Wormwood.* Little progress has been made on cleaning up the surrounding region. There is no equipment to decontaminate topsoil, and contaminated groundwater is backing up behind a concrete barrier near the reservoir that supplies water to the 2.6 million residents of Kiev. The bitter wormwood of Chernobyl is its nuclear poisoning and the long term effects of it. The star called Wormwood will poison rivers and springs.

Revelation 8:12-13

The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"

Fourth Trumpet:

When Lucifer led the rebellion in Heaven, he and his demons (1/3 of the heavenly host of angels) were cast down. The term stars has already been identified as angels in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 1:20).The third of the stars may refer to the fallen angels cast to the earth (Revelation 12:4). There will be an increase of demonic activity during the Tribulation period (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Revelation 9:1-11

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke

from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

The demonic locusts are directed to torture people who are not protected by the seal of God. The torment of their sting is to last for five months. The 144,000 were sealed so that they would be protected from this trumpet plague. The 144,000 will remain on earth along with the church during the first six trumpet judgments. Just as the Hebrew children worked among the Egyptians and were not subject to the plagues poured upon Egypt, so will those who are sealed by God (the elect and the 144,000), will not be subjected to the trumpet plagues.

A month according to the Hebrew Calendar is a period of 30 days. The floodwaters of judgment during the days of Noah remained on the earth for 150 days (5 months). If my hypothesis is correct and the first trumpet is sounded on the 1st day of the *first* month, this fifth trumpet would sound on the new moon of the fifth month. Those tormented by the sting of the demonic locusts would suffer but not die until the end of the ninth month. The 25th day of the ninth month (Kislev) is the Feast of Dedication (Chanukah or the Festival of Lights), when the temple defiled by the Antichrist will

be cleansed and rededicated as the Millennial Temple where Christ will be enthroned.

The king over the demonic hoard of locusts name in Hebrew is Abaddon meaning destroyer. The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. The name in Greek, Apollyon may be a play on the name Apollo. Romans referred to Apollo as the "Tormentor".

The first woe is past; two woes are yet to come.

The first woe was the plague of the fifth trumpet which summonsed the demonic locusts out of the abyss. The two woes to follow are the result of the sounding of the six and seventh trumpet.

Revelation 9:13-21

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.

The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

The Sixth Trumpet:

The Second Seal revealed a rider on a fiery red horse. We concluded, based on Zechariah's vision of four horse-drawn chariots that this army comes from the Far East. Revelation16:12 states that the Euphrates River is dried up to make way for the kings from the East; so that, they may be able to join the final battle at Armageddon. A vast hoard on horseback will take several months to travel across from Asia to the Middle East as its soldiers wreck havoc, rape, pillage, and burn villages and cities along their route. It is interesting to note that two of the colors found on their breastplates, red and yellow, are the colors of the communist Chinese flag. The third color, blue is the color of the United Nations flag. *The angels who had been bound* is a phrase that indicates that they were fallen angels. This army of 200 million is a demonized, pagan hoard. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire, smoke, and sulfur, so shall 1/3 of mankind be smote by God because of their idolatry and sexual immorality.

Matthew 24:29-31

> *"Immediately after the distress of those days" 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'*
>
> *"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.*

REVELATION 9:12 – 10:11

THE MYSTERY OF GOD WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED!

Revelation 9:12

The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

THE FIRST WOE was the 5th trumpet: *The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.* Out of the abyss rose demonic locusts who were directed to torture people who are not protected by the seal of God. The torment of their sting is to last for five months. The 144,000 were sealed so that they would be protected from this trumpet plague. The two woes that are to follow relate to the 6th and 7th trumpets.

Revelation 9:13-19

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.

The Sixth Trumpet:

The Second Seal revealed a rider on a fiery red horse. We concluded, based on Zechariah's vision of four chariots that this army comes from the Far East. Revelation 16:12 states that the Euphrates River is dried up to make way for the kings from the east; so that, they may be able to join in the final battle that will take place at Armageddon.

"The angels who had been bound" is a phrase that indicates that they were fallen angels. How would it be possible to dry up the water of the enormous Euphrates River? Of course God could do this supernaturally. When the book of Revelation was written 1900 years ago, it would have taken a great natural disaster or a great amount of labor to divert the flow of the Euphrates so that an army could cross it. (In 539 B.C., Cyrus and his army diverted the flow so that his troops could march across the riverbed and conquer Babylon). But in 1993, Turkey finished construction on the Ataturk Dam which can dry up the flow of the great Euphrates River.

The great horde wore breastplates that were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. Two of the colors that are found in their breastplates, red and yellow are the colors of the Red Chinese flag. The third color, blue, is the color of the U.N. flag. Mao Tse Tung boasted in his personal diary that he could field an army of 200 million men. The CIA World Factbook says that the number of men in China, ages 15-49, of military age and fit for military service is estimated to be over 203,000,000 as of 2002.

There is a little-known battle for survival going in some parts of the world, especially in India and China. Those at risk are baby girls, and the casualties are in the millions each year. The weapons being

used against them are prenatal sex selection, abortion and female infanticide — the systematic killing of girls soon after they are born. In China, much of the blame can be placed on Beijing's one-child policy, which took effect in 1979. There is a strong son preference for various socio-economic reasons, such as the son being responsible for carrying on the family name and support in old age. Therefore there is now an imbalance in the multiple millions of many more males than females.

Perhaps the armies from the east are comprised of the many female starved men who are possessed by the locust-like demons from the abyss. Just as Sodom was destroyed by fire, smoke and sulfur so shall 1/3 of mankind be meted out this judgment from God.

Revelation 9:20-21

> *The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.*

Although those who hold to a pretribulation rapture insist that there is a great revival of those who are "left behind," Scripture indicates that the rest of mankind not killed by the plagues still did not repent nor stop worshiping demons.

Revelation 10:1-4

> *Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."*

The Mighty Angel is described as robed in a cloud, rainbow over his head, face that shined like the sun and with legs like fiery pillars:

Revelation 14:14 describes the one seated on the cloud as one "like a son of man." Revelation 4:3 "A rainbow encircled the throne." Matthew 17:2 - The transfiguration of Jesus "His face shone like the sun." Revelation 1:15 - "His feet were like bronze glowing in the furnace." The Mighty Angel shouted like the roar of a lion. The Angel of the Lord, the Lion of Judah, stands on land and sea over which He has dominion. All authority has been given to him. When He shouted the seven thunders spoke. 1 Samuel 7:10 tells us that the LORD *thundered...against the Philistines.* The sealing of words of the seven thunders indicates that the judgment spoken by God will be revealed in the distant future (perhaps at the end of the millennial reign at the White Throne judgment when books are opened).

Revelation 10:5-11

> *Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay. But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."*
>
> *Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."*
>
> *So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."*

In the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished. What is a biblical mystery and what will be accomplished at the last trumpet?

A biblical mystery is a plan of God that has not, as of yet, been revealed. It is not a secret to be kept, but a progressive revelation. The following are some important biblical mysteries:

1) The church as the body of Christ (Eph 3:1-11, 6:19; Col 4:3).
2) The church as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:28-32)
3) The translation of the living saints (ICo 15:51-52; IThes 4:14, 17).
4) The mystery of lawlessness (2Thes 2:7; Mat 13:33).
5) Israel's blindness in part until the full number of Gentiles has come into the Church (Ro 11:25).

In the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the following will be accomplished: The full number of Gentiles will have come into the Body of Christ. The dead in Christ will rise first and those who are alive will be translated in the twinkling of an eye. The rapture will occur as lawlessness will be at its full. The whole unsaved world will be worshipping the image of the beast. The bride will be taken up to heaven for judgment as to reward and for the wedding feast of the Lamb. Israel's spiritual blindness will be removed. All of these mysteries will be accomplished at the same time.

Matthew 24: 37-39

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

The earth will be full of violence, as in the days of Noah, and promiscuity, as in the days of Sodom when Christ returns for his church.

Genesis 7:1-10

The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with

you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made."

And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.

Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

Noah and his family entered the ark 7 days prior to the flood. During that week, 7 pairs of clean animals and 1 pair of unclean animals entered the opened ark.

Genesis 7:11-16

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

On that very day (17th day of the 2nd month) that the springs of the deep burst forth and the floodgates of heaven were opened, God shut them in. They were safe from the waters of judgment. Until the

ark was closed, it was accessible for anyone who wished to enter into the safety of God's provision.

Acts 10:9-23

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

Peter's vision of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air did not concern itself with the laws of uncleanliness in regards to food. It was a symbolic picture of the

Gentiles (Daniel's visions of beasts represented nations). Peter was to take the gospel to Cornelius.

The spiritual picture of Noah's Ark is one where the nations are entering into the Body of Christ. Pairs of all creatures that had the *breath of life* in them entered into the ark. The ark was opened for 7 days (Daniel's 70th Week) as those who are born-again by the Holy Spirit come into the Body of Christ. At the end of the 7 days (the 7 years of the Tribulation), just prior to the pouring out of God's wrath (7 bowls/final plagues), the door is shut (the rapture of the church).

Genesis 8:13-14

> *By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry.*

By the 27th day of the 2nd month (Noah's 601st year), God commanded them to come out. They were in the ark 1 year and 10 days until they were commanded to leave.

There is a ten day period between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. The Jubilee occurs on the 50th year (7x7+1 year). On the Day of Atonement, the year following 7 Sabbatical years begins the Jubilee year. The 7th trumpet is sounded at the New Moon on the 7th month (Rosh HaShana/The Feast of Trumpets).

Exodus 19:1-2

> *In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on the very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.*

Exodus 19:10-13

> *And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain*

or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain."

All of Israel camped at the base of the mountain. They were to consecrate themselves. On the third day, God would speak to them. Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up the mountain. When the Lord descends with a shout and the trumpet call of God, the dead in Christ shall rise first.

The base of the mountain symbolizes the earth, while the top of the mountain symbolizes heaven – the dwelling place of God. The giving of the Law was accompanied by thunder, lightning, smoke, trumpet blast and earthquakes. These awesome displays of God's power and divine presence are paralleled in manifestations that occur prior to the Rapture.

Exodus 24:15-16

When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.

On the 7th day Moses went up into the glory cloud. There were 3 days and 7 days. Ten days passed between the arrival at Mt. Sinai and Moses going up to be in the presence of God.

Acts 1:3

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Jesus appeared in resurrection power and was seen over a period of 40 days. He ascended into heaven. The Holy Spirit came down in power on Pentecost (50 days after the resurrection). There was

a period of 10 days between Jesus going up to heaven and the Holy Spirit coming down to indwell the church.

Ten days elapsed between the arrival at Mt. Sinai and Moses ascending the mountain. Ten days elapsed between the Ascension and Pentecost. Ten days of introspection and soul search called the Days of Awe elapse between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. David marries Abigail ten days after Nabol is stricken. Ten days (3+7) elapse between Jacob fleeing Laban (Babylon) and their meeting in Gilead (The Promised Land).

The Rapture of the church at the 7th Trumpet will allow for three days of consecration (works passing through the fire) and a seven day wedding feast (traditional in Judaism).

Revelation 10:8-11

> *Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."*
>
> *So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."*

The sweet and sour taste foretells of both reward and punishment. The prophecies to yet be told will give specific details of the blessings of God's people and the wrath to be poured out upon his enemies.

1260 DAYS 42 MONTHS 3½ YEARS		1260 DAYS 42 MONTHS 3½ YEARS
THE FIRST ½ OF THE TRIBULATION	MID-POINT OF THE TRIBULATION	THE SECOND ½ OF THE TRIBULATION
→	↑	←
FALSE PEACE TEMPLE REBUILT	Abomination of Desolation Antichrist is Revealed	ISRAEL HIDES SAINTS PERSECUTED TWO WITNESSES TESTIFY

THE SECOND ½ OF THE TRIBULATION

PLUS 45 DAYS

DANIEL'S 1335 DAYS

MID-POINT OF THE TRIBULATION	1250 DAYS FEAST OF TRUMPETS	1260 DAYS DAY OF ATONEMENT	1290 DAYS *THIRTY DAYS OF MOURNING*	1335 DAYS FEAST OF DEDICATION
	THE RAPTURE			
SACRIFICE CEASES	*(DAYS CUT SHORT)*	*THE RETURN*		*25TH OF KISLEV*

REVELATION 11:1-12
THE TWO WITNESSES

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

—Revelation 11:1-3

THE ORIGINAL TEMPLE structure, built in Jerusalem during the reign of King Solomon, was destroyed in 586 B.C. The commander of the imperial guard of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, gave orders to set the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem on fire (Jer 52:12-13). After the Jews returned from the seventy year long Babylonian captivity, the second temple was constructed under the leadership of Zerubbabel (Ezr 3:8). In 20 B.C., on the site of the former temples, Herod the Great gave the orders to build a 15 story high structure following the floor dimensions of the original Holy Place and Most Holy Place. Although the impressive sanctuary was completed in 18 months, renovation of the outer courts and related buildings were not completed until 64 A.D. The lavish temple, surrounding courts and associated buildings were all destroyed by fire six years later by the Romans. Tish'ah B'Av which is the 9th day of Av (the 5th month) on the Hebrew ceremonial calendar,

is an annual day of solemn remembrance for Jews throughout the world. On this day of the year, Solomon's temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. and six and a half centuries later, the elaborately renovated second temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.

For over nineteen centuries, the nation of Israel has been without a temple or a sacrificial system. There are those who claim that an actual third temple will not be constructed. But John was told to measure the temple and the altar and to count the worshipers there. The prophet Ezekiel was also given a vision of a temple in Jerusalem (Eze 40:2). Scripture describes specific measurements of the floor plan of the temple measured by Ezekiel. Since the measurements of this temple differ from the former temples, I believe that Ezekiel's temple is yet to be built.

> *He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.*
>
> —Daniel 9:27a

Daniel prophesied that the Antichrist would put an end to sacrifice and offering halfway through the last seven years of this evil age. Scripture not only indicates that the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem; but also, the system of sacrifice and offering will be reinstituted. Although the Antichrist will set himself up in this temple proclaiming to be God (2 Th 2:4), Scripture declares that this temple is God's temple (Rev 11:1). After the beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20), the temple will be cleansed and rededicated to the LORD (Da 12:12).

It is my understanding that Daniel's 70th week comes to a close on the 10th day of the seventh month when Yom Kippur is observed. According to this interpretation of end time events, the confirmation of the covenant takes place seven years earlier on the day after Yom Kippur. By counting 42 months forward on the Hebrew calendar from the day that the covenant is confirmed, we can calculate the middle of the 'seven' as occurring on the 10th day of the first month. It is noteworthy that the 10th of Nisan (Abib) is significant for two reasons. First, this is the day when the lambs were to be selected for future slaughter at the Passover (Ex 12:3). Secondly, this day marks

the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, commonly referred to as Palm Sunday. I believe that the Antichrist will put an end to sacrifice and offering on the day that the LORD commanded the children of Israel to select the Paschal lamb.

The apparently *fatal wound* and counterfeit resurrection of the beast most probably will be orchestrated by Satan to occur according to the Hebrew ceremonial calendar as well. There is the likelihood that the Antichrist will receive his fatal wound (Rev 13:3) on the day of the Passover, and his so-called resurrection (Rev 13:12) will occur on the Feast of Firstfruits. The Jewish people will embrace this false Messiah until the abomination (his idolatrous image) causes desolation (the true worshipers of God to flee). The Gentiles trod down Jerusalem for 42 months while the 144,000 are cared for in a place prepared for them in the desert (Rev 12:6).

The events associated with the middle of the 'seven' occur during the first month of the Hebrew calendar, as Satan offers a counterfeit version of Christ's *Passion Week*. First, Antichrist puts an end to temple sacrifice and offering. Subsequently, he will receive and be healed of a fatal wound. The False Prophet will then erect an image of the beast in the temple to be worshiped. Those worshipers who refuse to bow their knee to an image will flee to the desert. John was directed to count the worshipers in the temple (Rev 11:1). Since the worshipers flee when the image of the beast is placed in a wing of the temple, it can be concluded that John's vision predates the abomination that causes desolation. The end of sacrifice and offering occurs on the 10th of Nisan. The Antichrist receives his power and authority from ten Gentile rulers (Rev 17:12-13). Therefore, the 42 month period when the Gentiles trample down Jerusalem begins on the 10th of Nisan and is completed 3½ years later on the 10th of day of the seventh month (Tishri). The Day of Atonement marks the end of the time of the Gentiles as Christ returns to the earth to redeem Israel.

> *And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.*
>
> —Revelation 11:3-4

We have determined that John's vision of temple worship occurs prior to the Passover, in the middle of the 'seven'. In order for the two witnesses to prophesy to the nation of Israel, they must begin their testimony in Jerusalem before the *woman* flees into the desert (Rev 12:6). The two witnesses complete 1,260 days of testimony before the seventh trumpet is sounded on Rosh HaShana (Rev 11:7-14), the 1st day of the seventh month. Since the two witnesses complete 3½ years of proclamation in the sixth month, we can determine that they initiate their ministry in the twelfth month (Adar), 42 months earlier. They begin their outcry clothed in sackcloth, which is a sign of mourning and repentance. During the month of Adar, the festival of Purim is observed. This post-exilic holiday commemorates God's deliverance of the Jews from slaughter during the time of the Persian Empire. King Xerxes, ruler of the Persian Empire, had elevated Haman above all of the nobles of the realm. Haman became enraged when Mordecai, a righteous Jew, refused to kneel before Haman or pay him honor (Est 3:5). In revenge, Haman not only intended to kill Mordecai, but plotted to exterminate all the Jews throughout the Persian Empire. Note that the Persians were Aryans. Iran and the former Persian Empire, which spanned from what is today known as Turkey on the east to Afghanistan and Pakistan to the west, is now comprised of Muslim states who serve Allah the moon god.

The fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar are celebrated annually as the time when the Jews were delivered from their enemies. Adar is the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration (Est 9:20-22). Queen Esther requested that the Jews of Susa join her in three days of fasting and prayer. The Jews residing in the capital city put on sackcloth and ashes as they prayed that Esther would find favor with the king. The thirteenth of Adar, the day before Purim, is a solemn day of remembrance known as the Fast of Esther. Purim is a holiday that is first observed as a day of fasting and sorrow, followed by two days of great celebration and the giving of gifts (Est 9:22b).

> *Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.*
>
> —Rev 11:7

For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

—Revelation 11:9-10

Purim marks a time when the entire nation was threatened with annihilation because of the refusal to bow down or honor a blaphemous, earthly ruler of a world empire. This historic event foreshadows the time when the nation of Israel will be threatened to be swept away (Rev 12:15) for refusing to bow down to the image of the beast. The two witnesses will complete their time of prophesying in sackcloth, and then are killed. Their murder will be celebrated by the exchanging of gifts, as is the custom on Purim. There are many parallels between Purim and the events associated with Israel during the reign of the Antichrist. Since the two witnesses begin their ministry in the month of Adar, it is quite possible that the 1,260 day period commences on the thirteenth day which marks the Fast of Esther. This starting date would allow enough time for all prophesied events relating to the two witnesses to be completed before the church is raptured at the seventh trumpet.

Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here."And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

—Revelation 11:12

The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great - and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

—Revelation 11:18

The two witnesses are prophets of God. After they are called up to heaven, there will be a severe earthquake in Jerusalem. Scripture states that soon after those two events, the seventh trumpet will be sounded (Rev 11:14). At the Rapture, the elect receive their glorified

bodies. After a time of reward, the wedding supper of the Lamb takes place (Rev 19:7). It is logical that the Rapture and subsequent time of reward will not take place until the two witnesses, who are prophets of God, are taken up to heaven. Verse 18 of Revelation makes it clear that the time for the pouring out of God's wrath upon the earth is associated with the time of reward for the saints and the prophets.

> *These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.*
>
> —Revelation 11:4-6

Olive trees produce a valuable fruit which is highly esteemed by Middle Eastern people. Olives are enjoyed as a nutritious food and utilized as a source of cooking and lamp oil.

> *"Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning.*
>
> —Exodus 27:20

Olives had to be pressed to produce oil and then the oil filtered in order to screen out impurities. When the oil looked clear, it was pure enough to be used to fill the lamps of the sacred lampstand that stood in the Holy Place. God's people will be hard pressed and purified by persecution during the time of the Great Tribulation. It is His divine purpose to produce the pure oil of the Holy Spirit and fill the lampstand of His Temple, the church.

The LORD had given the prophet Zechariah a vision during the time of the restoration of the temple by Zerubbabel. This vision depicted two olive trees and a lampstand. Zechariah sought the meaning of the vision. The angel of the LORD replied, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth." (Zec 4:14). The LORD Almighty had chosen Zerubbabel, from the line of David, and the high priest Joshua to fulfill the divine plan to restore

the chosen people and rebuild Jerusalem. The prophet Zechariah, the high priest Joshua and Zerubbabel the king foreshadowed the Anointed One who was to come. The Messiah of Israel is a prophet who speaks for God, a priest who intercedes between God and man, and a king who rules over God's people. Jesus is the Word of God (Jn 1:1). He is our high priest who always lives to make intercession for us (Heb 7:25). Jesus is the Lord of lords and the King of kings (Rev 17:14). The two witnesses of Revelation are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth. When their ministry is completed, Jesus will come down to earth to restore the holy city and redeem the surviving remnant of Israel. He will establish His throne in God's temple.

The two witnesses are empowered to shut up the sky so that it will not rain. The prophet Elijah was empowered by the Spirit to bring divine judgment upon Israel during the reign of evil king Ahab (1 Ki 16:30). The nation endured a three year drought until the people turned from Baal worship and returned to the LORD their God (1 Ki 18:45). Many theologians agree that one of the two witnesses will be Elijah. Elijah was taken up to heaven by God and did not die. It is prophesied that Elijah will return before the Day of the LORD.

> *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.*
>
> —Malachi 4:5

Some students of the Bible believe that the second witness will be Enoch because, like Elijah, he did not die but was taken up to be with God (Gen 5:24). I believe that there is strong scriptural evidence that points to Moses as the second witness. The witnesses are empowered to turn the waters into blood and strike the earth with various plagues as did Moses during the time of the Exodus. Moses represents the Law, while Elijah is representative of the prophets. Both Elijah and Moses were with Jesus at the mountain of transfiguration (Mt 17:3). The book of Jude records that the archangel Michael disputed with the devil about the body of Moses (Jude 9). The only argument offered against the theory that the second witness will be Moses is based on Hebrews 9:27 which reads: *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.* Because Moses died, they rule out the possibility

that he is the second witness. But Jesus is the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25). Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, and the only son of a widow, were all raised from the dead to physically die again. With God all things are possible!

The two witnesses, no matter who God chooses to fulfill His divine plan, will be anointed prophets. Their lamps will burn brightly with the pure oil of His Spirit. Those who will have ears to hear will understand and receive their testimony. Those whose deeds are evil will prefer to live in the darkness (Jn 3:19) and will tormented by the light of the two lampstands (Rev 11:10).

It is my understanding that the second half of Daniel's 'seven' will be marked by the testimony of the two witnesses and the persecution of the saints of God. At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the church is raptured and God pours out the bowls of His wrath upon the earth. Ten days later, Jesus returns to the earth to mete out punishment upon His enemies, redeem Israel and establish His throne on earth.

REVELATION 11:13-19
"AT THAT VERY HOUR ..."

At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.
—Revelation 11:13

THE VERY HOUR that the two witnesses were taken up to heaven in a cloud, there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. In verse eight of chapter eleven of Revelation, the great city was not called by name; but instead, was figuratively referred to as *Sodom* and *Egypt* where our Lord was crucified. Sodom was known for its hedonism and Egypt for its idolatry and occultism. Jerusalem was chosen by God to be the site of the temple where his Name would dwell forever. When Solomon finished building the temple of the LORD, the LORD appeared to him a second time and said:

I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.
—1 Kings 9:3

In Revelation chapter eleven, Jerusalem is not called by its name. Jerusalem means the city of peace. It is where the Name of the LORD, the Prince of Peace will dwell forever. The great city is

figuratively called Sodom and Egypt. Sodom was infamous for its natural prostitution and Egypt for its spiritual prostitution. During the reign of the Antichrist, the temple and the city are places of wickedness and abominations. The LORD'S eyes see great defilement and presumptuous sin, and his heart is grieved because they... *did not repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts* (Revelation 9:21).

The destruction of a tenth of the city and seven thousand of its inhabitants indicates that Jerusalem is no longer under the dominion of the god of this world as the seventh trumpet is about to sound.

> *No person devoted to destruction may be ransomed; he must be put to death.*
>
> —Leviticus 27:29

To better understand the concept of a person or object devoted to destruction, we shall briefly examine an account from the reign of King Saul. Saul was given instructions by Samuel to attack the Amalekites and totally destroy them and everything that belonged to them because they waylaid Israel as they came up from Egypt. But Saul disobeyed the Word of the LORD and spared Agag king of the Amalekites and the best of the sheep and the cattle. Samuel replied to Saul's rationalization by saying:

> *"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*
>
> —1Samuel 15:22

Saul did not heed the command to devote the Amalekites and their possessions to destruction. Because Saul kept the best of the flocks and herds and spared Agag, the LORD rejected him as king over Israel. Prior to the sounding of the seventh trumpet, a tenth or tithe of Jerusalem collapses and seven thousand are killed or devoted to destruction. The seven thousand are killed after Elijah and the other prophet (probably Moses) are taken up to heaven in a cloud.

During the first ministry of Elijah, the number seven thousand also has important significance.

The reign of King Ahab marked great apostasy in Israel. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple. His evil reign foreshadowed that of the Antichrist. By the word of the LORD, Elijah shut up the heavens for three and a half years so there was neither dew nor rain in Israel. Many true prophets were martyred, so that in great dismay Elijah dejectedly said to the LORD:

> *"I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me too ...*
>
> —1 Kings 19:14

The LORD replied to Elijah:

> *"Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel - all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."*
>
> —1 Kings 19:18

During Elijah's first earthly ministry, many in Israel turn from the covenant and offer up sacrifices to Baal in the temple. Although evil King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel seek to destroy God's people, God reserves seven thousand in Israel. During the time of the Antichrist, after Elijah completes his second earthly ministry, seven thousand people are devoted to destruction.

> *Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.*
>
> —Rev 11:13b

During the time of the Israel's wilderness experience, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram tried to seize the priesthood from Aaron. Moses proved to the Israelite community that it was the LORD who chose him and Aaron to lead and represent the people. Moses said:

But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens up its mouth and swallows them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt.

—Numbers 16:30

After the earth swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the people were terrified that the ground would swallow them up also. Although the Israelites were terrified, they failed to give glory to God. With the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb, all the men of Israel age twenty years or older and their wives perished in the wilderness.

The New International Version commentary states "... *gave glory to the God of heaven.*" *"Not an act of repentance but the terrified realization that Christ, not the antichrist, is the true Lord of all."*

I disagree that those who glorified God were comprised of individuals that had taken the mark of the beast. According to Zechariah 14:2, the Scripture declares:

I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it. The city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.

I believe that the Jewish survivors from the assault against Jerusalem and subsequent earthquake are those who give glory to the God of heaven. Unlike their forefathers in the desert who perished in their sins, they will be saved when the Lord returns to earth. It is written:

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved ...

—Romans 11:25b-26a

The sounding of the seventh trumpet announces that the full number of Gentiles has come into the body of Christ and the church is raptured. The earthquake occurs and the remaining remnant of the Jews in Jerusalem gives glory to God.

The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.
—Revelation 11:14

The first woe was initiated when the fifth angel sounded his trumpet (Revelation 9:1-12). Out of the Abyss rose a hoard of demonic locusts that were capable of inflicting agony upon those who were not sealed by God. Those who were victims of their scorpion-like sting will suffer for five months longing for death but not finding it.

The second woe commenced at the sounding of the trumpet by the sixth angel (Revelation 9:12-19). Two hundred million demonically empowered mounted troops were released to kill a third of mankind.

The third and final woe is linked to the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The final trumpet blast announces the outpouring of the seven last plagues on the earth. These bowls of God's wrath will wreck havoc on both the earth and the ungodly inhabitants who have rejected Christ and taken the mark of the beast (Revelation 16:1-21).

Revelation 11:15-18

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great— and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

These pronouncements are linked to the sounding of the seventh trumpet. They evidence that both the time of the rapture and reward for the saints, as well as, the outpouring of God's wrath upon the ungodly inhabitants of the earth, is at hand. Reward and punishment mark the great and terrible day of the LORD.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.
—1 Colossians 5:51

The final trumpet call announces the ingathering of God's people and the arrival of the King of kings to meet his saints in the air. The final trumpet sounds as the last plagues are to be poured out upon the earth.

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, am earthquake and a great hailstorm.
—Revelation 11:19

The tabernacle on earth was patterned after the heavenly temple (Exodus 25:9,40). The revealing of the Ark of the Covenant in the temple takes place after the rapture of the church. Seeing the Ark of the Covenant symbolizes that now God's plan of redemption returns its focus to the Nation of Israel. Salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. Christ raptures his church because the full number of Gentiles has come in. The surviving remnant of Israel awaits during the *Ten Days of Awe* as the LORD pours out a spirit of grace and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:10). The power of God is manifested in the display of natural phenomena. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth for God's cup of wrath is at its full!

REVELATION 12:1-6
WHO ARE THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON?

A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.

—Revelation 12:1

A THEOLOGIAN'S METHOD OF interpretation (hermeneutical style), is often biased by his or her religious traditions. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, the woman clothed with the sun has been identified as Mary, the mother of Jesus. Roman Catholics esteem Mary and she has been given the title, *The Queen of Heaven.* Since Mary is not identified in an exalted position (or even mentioned), in any other passage of Scripture where heaven is described, Catholics use this passage as a proof text to support their doctrine. As we later examine these first two verses in light of the context of the rest of the paragraph, we will discover that their interpretation (which is based upon tradition), does not line up with Scripture.

Reformed theologians (Covenant theologians), on the other hand, view the woman as symbolically represented the universal Christian church. The Reformed position holds to the doctrine that God has finished with Israel as a nation. According to their viewpoint, any reference in the New Testament that refers to Israel is automatically interpreted to symbolize the church. Therefore, both the 144,000 of Revelation chapter seven as well as the two witnesses of Revelation

chapter eleven are viewed as symbolizing the church. This figurative method of interpretation is known as using a non-literal hermeneutic. For example, the epistle of James is addressed to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations. Their view is that James had written a general letter to the early Christian church and that he has established a precedent by addressing the New Testament Christians as the twelve tribes of Israel. According to Reformed theology, the term *twelve tribes* when used in the New Testament no longer is to be understood literally.

The error in this line of thinking stems from the fact that they have based their interpretation upon the traditions of their denomination, as opposed to interpreting the text according to context and historical setting. Historically, James was known as the Bishop of Jerusalem. The church at Jerusalem was almost exclusively comprised of Jewish Christians. After the martyring of Stephen, the Jewish Christians fled to avoid further persecution. Both the obvious Jewish nature of how the Book of James was written (its context), as well as the historical setting (its original intended audience were Jewish believers who were dispersed among the *Goyim* - Hebrew for nations or Gentiles), indicates that the term twelve tribes refers to ethnic Jews.

The Bible is its own best interpreter. As opposed to identifying the woman of Revelation chapter twelve according to human tradition let us turn to a biblical account in the Hebrew Scriptures that already identified this figure:

Jacob had twelve sons. Rachel, who was Jacob's favorite wife, had been barren for many years. When his beloved Rachel finally gave birth to her firstborn son Joseph, Jacob demonstrated that Joseph was his favorite son.

> *Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and made him a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.*
>
> —Genesis 37:3-5

Joseph's first dream was set in a field. He dreamt that he and his brothers were binding sheaves of grain. Joseph's sheaf rose up and his brothers' sheaves bowed down before it. The sons of Israel understood that the dream meant that Joseph would rule over them. The fine robe that Jacob gave to Joseph was an indication that Jacob was treating Joseph like a firstborn son, although Joseph was birthed after his ten half-brothers and half-sister Dinah. They were jealous that Joseph would be named as Jacob's primary heir and entitled to a double portion. Joseph's second dream not only provoked his brothers' anger, but also disturbed his father.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

—Genesis 37:9

When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?"

—Genesis 37:10

Joseph's mother Rachel died in childbirth after having delivered Joseph's brother Benjamin. Rachel was survived by her sister Leah, who Jacob married only because he was duped by their father Laban. It is clear that in the interpretation of Joseph's second dream that the sun represented his father, the moon his mother (step-mother) and the eleven stars represented his eleven brothers (ten half-brothers and younger brother Benjamin). In chapter twelve of the Book of Revelation the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet and wearing a crown of twelve stars (Joseph and his eleven brothers), according to the biblical interpretation already stated in Scripture, and is a symbolic representation of the twelve tribes of Israel. The woman of Revelation chapter twelve is neither symbolizes Mary nor the church, but represents the 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

—Revelation 12:2

Although God miraculously used Mary as his chosen vessel to birth and raise Jesus, it was the entire nation of Israel that cried out to God for its prophesied Messiah. Moses prefigured Christ in his role as deliverer of the chosen people from the bondage of Egyptian slavery.

> *The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.*
>
> —Exodus 3:7

In fact, the future Messiah would be a prophet like Moses, raised up from among the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 18:15). The Messiah birthed from Israel would come to seek and save people from the bondage of sin. As the nation of Israel cried out for a deliverer because of their Egyptian masters, so did the chosen people cry out for the promised Messiah to free them from the yoke of Roman occupation.

> *Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.*
>
> —Revelation 12:3-4a

The dragon is the color red. This color symbolizes sin (... *though your sins are like scarlet... though they are red as crimson...* Isaiah 1:18). The enormous red dragon is Satan. He led a rebellion in heaven and was cast down to earth.

> *How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations.*
>
> —Isaiah 14:12

> *He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*
>
> —Luke 10:18

The dragon swept a third of the angels (the fallen angels or demons) out of the sky and flung them to the earth. Crowns symbolize

power and authority. The seven crowns on his heads represent power and authority given by Satan to the rulers of the empires of the world.

> *The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.*
>
> —Luke 4:5-6

Note that Jesus did not challenge Satan's boast that the devil was given all the kingdoms of the earth. When Adam sinned, he put himself under the authority of Satan and relinquished his right to have dominion on earth.

> *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?*
>
> —Romans 6:16

Historically, according to the biblical account, six nations were world empires which have ruled over Israel. In the past, the rulers of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome dominated the world scene empowered by their occult, polytheistic (of many gods) religions. They were worshipping idols but were actually offering their sons and daughters as sacrifices to demons (Ps 106:36-37). In the future, the Antichrist will rule with power and authority from Satan. He is symbolized by the dragon's seventh head and will be the last and most heinous king of all. The scarlet beast symbolizes the governmental agencies employed by Satan throughout world history until the end of the age when Christ returns.

> *The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he may devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule the nations with an iron scepter.*
>
> —Revelation 12:4b-5a

When Moses was born, the Pharaoh gave orders to the Hebrew midwives to kill any male babies, but the midwives feared God and did not do what the Egyptian king had commanded them to do (Exodus 1:15-17). He then ordered that any boy that is born must be thrown into the Nile (Exodus 1:22). When King Herod heard that the one who has been born king of the Jews was living in Bethlehem, he was also used by Satan in an attempt to devour the male child. The Messiah came as a suffering servant to redeem men for God by his precious atoning blood. But He will return as a conqueror and will rule the nations with an iron scepter.

> *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."*
>
> —Psalm 2:8-9

> *Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the wine-press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.*
>
> —Revelation 19:15

Note that Christ is coming back to rule the nations with a rod of iron. Armageddon is not the destruction of all the nations but the destruction of the wicked armies and rulers of those nations. The glorified saints will rule and reign with Yeshua for 1,000 years. We will rule and reign over the survivors from the nations that attacked Jerusalem. These people have taken the mark of the beast and have refused to repent of their idolatries and occult practices. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. But this confession is not a confession of faith and devotion from the ungodly masses. It is done in obedience by a conquered people before the One who rules with a scepter of iron with which to strike the nations.

> *And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.*
>
> —Revelation 12:5b-6

After the ascension of Jesus, He sat down at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:34-36), fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 110. This passage states that the child (Jesus) was snatched up to God and to his throne and then the woman fled into the desert. The Roman Catholic position is that the woman clothed with the sun is Mary the mother of Jesus. But Mary went down to Egypt with her husband Joseph and with the baby Jesus. The woman of Revelation twelve flees to the desert without her child, after He has ascended to heaven. This passage contains prophecy yet to be fulfilled that will occur somewhere around the middle of Daniel's 70th week. The 144,000 (the woman), will flee from the temple and Jerusalem after the Antichrist puts an end to sacrifice and his image is erected in the temple. It has been speculated that the place prepared in the desert is the rock-cut city of Petra in Edom located about 50 miles south of the Dead Sea. This city was a notable fortress and stronghold. *She might be taken care of for 1,260 days.* The 144,000 will be kept from harm during the second half of the 70th week. Half of seven years is three and a half years or forty-two months (1,260 days on the Jewish calendar).

REVELATION 12:7-17

"THE DRAGON WENT OFF TO MAKE WAR ..."

IN OUR STUDY of the first six verses of this chapter of the Book of Revelation, we discovered the identity of the woman who is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. As opposed to the traditional teachings of the Roman Catholic Church which proclaims that she is Mary the mother of Jesus and in contradiction to the Reformed theological view that she represents the universal church, the Scriptures reveal that she symbolizes the twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 37:9-10). The prophecy of chapter twelve of Revelation, relating to the *woman,* will be fulfilled during the second half of the *70th week* by the 144,000 who have been sealed on their forehead. The enormous red dragon symbolizes Satan. Each of the seven heads represents the world rulers that he has empowered over the course of Israel's history.

> *"They [the seven heads] are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come he must remain for a little while."*
>
> —Revelation 17:10

At the time of the writing of the book of Revelation, Israel had suffered captivity and domination by five empires over time, each which had fallen from positions of leadership. Each kingdom had ruled over many nations and enslaved many peoples at the height

of its power. These former world powers in order of appearance on the world scene: Egypt; Assyria; Babylon; Medo-Persia; Greece; and Rome. The one head of the beast still in power at the time of John's exile to Patmos (See Revelation 1:9) was the ruler of the last empire, Rome. The head or king yet to come and reign for a brief time will be ruler over the final world empire, the coming man of sin, the Antichrist.

The dragon bears seven crowns on his heads. The crowns signify that each world ruler had power in past times and authority to rule as given by Satan under God's sovereign plan. God is the ultimate ruler over Satan and all creation. Satan has a legal right; however, limited by God's ordained boundaries, to exercise demonic influence over sinful man.

The woman s child snatched up to God is a figurative representation of Christ's ascension and subsequent enthronement at the right hand of the Father. The statement that woman fled into the desert where she would be taken care of for 1,260 days is apocalyptic language that means the 144,000 will be protected during the second half of Daniel's 70th week (the time of the Great Tribulation) from Satan's attacks.

> *And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*
>
> —Revelation 12:7-9

> *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*
>
> —Ephesians 6:12

During the time of the Great Tribulation Satan and his demonic hoards no longer will travel in the heavenly realms but will be totally excluded from heaven and will be cast down to earth.

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people -everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered.

—Daniel 12:1

The Archangel Michael is the protector of the nation of Israel (Daniel's people). Mid-tribulation, Satan is cast to earth and will vent his rage against the people of God. All hell will break loose. Those from the nation of Israel who are written in the Book of Life will be delivered through the time of great distress as through a refinery s fire.

In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people, 'and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

—Zechariah 13:8-9

Two-thirds is a fraction which is equivalent to .666 when written in decimals. During the horror of the holocaust, six million Jews were tortured and put to death. The total population of Jews during World War Two was about eighteen million people. During WWII, about one-third of all Jews in the world were killed. The holocaust will pale in comparison to the time of Jacob's trouble when two-thirds of Jews worldwide will perish.

How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it.

—Jeremiah 30:7

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the

sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.

—Revelation 12:10-12

Having been finally and totally cast from heaven, Satan is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short.

"See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who created the destroyer to work havoc..."

—Isaiah 54:16

Do not forget that God is sovereign and in total control. Although in the natural there is great persecution of both Israel and the church, God is using the baptism of fire to purify his people. They (the saints) overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb (Christ's atonement) and by the word of their testimony (they demonstrated their faith) by their willingness to suffer a martyr's death. Jesus said, *All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved* (Matthew 10:22). A pre-tribulation Rapture is a concept that serves to circumvent the purposes of God and denies God's sovereignty. John baptized with water, but Jesus came to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11-12). Death is swallowed up in victory (1Corinthians 15:54). If indeed we are in Christ, we will stand firm to the end.

Now it is God who makes us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

—1 Corinthians 1:21-22

No one can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. Then from his

mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

—Revelation 12:13-16

'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

—Exodus 19:4

When the LORD delivered Israel out of Egypt, He used metaphorical language to describe the Exodus. It was immediately after the plague of the firstborn that Israel fled into the wilderness with such speed that their bread was unleavened because it did not have time to rise. The term *two wings of a great eagle* means that the woman (the 144,000) will fly (swiftly travel) to her citadel in the desert. The serpent spewed water like a river to overtake the woman and sweep her away is a symbolic picture of an army sent in pursuit of the 144,000. As Pharaoh summonsed his troops to pursue Israel in the desert after the Exodus, so will the legions of the Antichrist pursue the 144,000. In Moses' day, Korah, Dathan and Abiram had demonstrated contempt for the LORD and were swallowed up by the earth (Numbers 16:25-33). As the Egyptian army was swallowed up by the Red Sea, so shall the soldiers of the Antichrist be swallowed up in an earthquake.

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring - those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

—Revelation 12:17

The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

—Daniel 7:25b

Both the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation speak of a period of three and a half years (time - one year, times - two years and half a time - ½ year: 1 + 2 + ½ = 3½ years) in which the Antichrist will successfully wage war against the saints.

For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

—Matthew 24:21-22

The church will be raptured, but not until the saints endure through much of the time of the Great Tribulation. For our sake, the days will be shortened.

Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.

—Daniel 7:27

For the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross scorning its shame. May we fix our eyes upon Jesus and see past the persecution of the time of great distress. Instead, may we see the joy of eternal glory set before us.

REVELATION 13:1-3

"THE DRAGON GAVE THE BEAST HIS POWER AND HIS THRONE"

And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.

—Revelation 13:1-3

THE BEAST OF Revelation chapter 13 emerges out of the sea and is described as having seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns on his horns. This description can be contrasted to the scarlet beast of Revelation 12 who appeared in heaven and had seven heads and ten horns, with seven crowns on his heads. Crowns symbolize power and authority. The dragon who is Satan led a rebellion in heaven and was cast down to earth taking a third of the angels (the fallen angels or demons) with him (Rev 12:4). The seven crowns on his heads represent power and authority given by Satan to the rulers of the empires of the world. In the past, the rulers of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome ruled empowered by their occult, polytheistic (of many gods) religions. They were worshipping idols but were actually offering their sons and daughters as sacrifices to demons (Ps 106:36-37). In the future, the Antichrist will rule with

power and authority from Satan. He will be the last and most heinous king of all. The scarlet beast symbolizes the governmental agencies employed by Satan throughout world history until the end of the age.

Verse nine of chapter twelve of the Book of Revelation states that the great dragon which was hurled down is that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan. The dragon is the color red. Scarlet or crimson represents sin (Isa 1:18). Satan is a liar and a thief. He was created full of wisdom and beauty (Ez 28:12) and was known as the morning star (Lucifer meaning light bearer). He was the beautiful cherub who led the worship of God in the highest heaven. In his pride and jealousy, he coveted worship for himself and led 1/3 of the angels in revolt against God (Rev 12:4). He was cast down as a bolt of lightning (Lk 10:18). Biblical names reflect character. Lucifer is now known as *Satan,* which means *the adversary.* The fallen angels are called demons or devils. Satan is the chief demon and also known as *The Devil.* The seven heads of the enormous red dragon represent seven kings.

> *They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come he must remain for a little while.*
>
> —Revelation 17:10

Satan who desires to be worshipped, an honor merited by God alone, tempted Jesus in the wilderness. He offered Jesus all the authority and splendor of the kingdoms of the world (Mt 4:8-9; Lk 4:5-7), because they were Satan's to give. Man had forfeited dominion over the earth when Adam fell into sin by willfully disobeying God. Satan is the prince of this world (Jn 12:31).

> *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the way of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*
>
> —Ephesians 2:1-2

Satan is the spirit who is at work in those who are separated from God by sin. Satan works through earthly kings and rulers to accomplish his goals. There are human, as well as, demonic agencies at work in world governments. The Bible offers two illustrations of

this principle in the prophesied judgments against the king of Babylon (Isa 14:12-20) and the king of Tyre (Ez 28:1-19). These passages of Scripture not only describe men who bear the characteristics of Satan, but also make direct references to Satan himself.

At the time of the writing of the book of Revelation, Israel had suffered captivity and domination by five empires which had fallen from positions of rulership. Each of these kingdoms had ruled over many nations and enslaved many peoples at the height of their power. These former world powers are: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. The one head of the beast who still was in power at the time of John's exile in Patmos (Rev 1:9) was the ruler of the Roman Empire. The head or king that was yet to come and reign for a short while will be the ruler over the last world empire, the Antichrist. The dragon had seven crowns on his heads. The crowns signify that each world ruler had power and authority to rule as given by Satan. God is the ultimate and sovereign ruler over all of creation. But Satan has a legal right, although limited by the boundaries set by God, to exercise his demonic influence over those who are disobedient. When we submit to God and resist the devil, he must flee (Ja 4:7). Those who seek power, wealth and self—glorification are serving the devil. The enormous red dragon had ten horns. In order to understand the significance of the ten horns, it is necessary to turn to the book of Daniel.

According to the first verse of Daniel chapter one, Nebuchadnezzer the king of Babylon had come to Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah and laid siege to the city (605 B.C.). In 586 B.C. the Babylonians destroyed the city and the temple. During the course of the Babylonian assault, there were three deportations of exiles from Judah to Babylonia. Daniel was among the first of the Judeans to be carried off. He was groomed for service in the Babylonian court along with Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach) and Azariah (Abednego). Daniel demonstrated his righteous character and obedience to God by his refusal to defile himself by eating or drinking the royal Babylonian food and wine. Pagan ritual included offering the first portions of royal food and wine to idols. Many of the meats came from unclean animals. Even acceptable animal meat from ceremonially clean animals would be defiled since the meat would

not be properly drained of blood (Lev 17:11). God blessed Daniel by giving Daniel great knowledge and understanding including the ability to understand visions and interpret dreams (Da 1:17).

In the second year of Nebuchadnezzer 's reign, the king was deeply troubled and had difficulty in sleeping due to a disturbing dream (Da 2:1). None of the court magicians or astrologers could tell the king his dream or offer an interpretation by their occult arts. The king was so angry at their inability that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon including Daniel and his three friends. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah sought the God of heaven and pleaded for mercy in regards to revealing the mystery of the king's dream. During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision (Da 2:19).

Nebuchadnezzer's dream was of an enormous, dazzling statue of a man. The head was of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet and toes partly of iron and partly of clay. As the king watched, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. The rock smashed the statue to dust and the wind blew the dust away without leaving a trace. The rock that struck and destroyed the statue grew into a mountain that filled the whole earth. The dream was a prophetic picture that represented the Babylonian empire and all the subsequent empires to follow until the end of the age. The rock is Christ who will destroy the wicked rulers and their empires. When the final world empire is destroyed, Christ will set up His kingdom on earth. The gold head represented Babylonia; the silver chest and arms, the MedoPersian empire; the bronze belly and thighs, the Greek empire; the iron legs, the Roman empire; and the feet and toes of a mixture of iron and clay, the final world empire to come. The ten toes of Nebuchadnezzer s dream correspond to the ten horns of the enormous red dragon of Revelation. A confederation or alliance of ten states or regions will comprise a power base for the Antichrist.

Daniel himself was given dreams and visions concerning the world empires to come while he served in the courts of Babylon during the reign of Belshazzar, a successor to the throne of Nebuchadnezzer.

Revelation 13:1-3: "The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne"

Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came came out of the sea."

—Daniel 7:2

But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.

—Isaiah 57:20

The churning sea symbolizes wicked humanity. The beasts are ceremonially unclean animals which are representative of Gentile nations (Ac 10:9-23). Each beast or nation rises up out of the wicked sea of humanity to rise to power. Beasts dominate and devour according to their speed, size and strength. At times in world history, certain nations have risen to power for a time by devouring and trampling down their adversaries. Each beast of Daniel's vision parallels a segment of the statue of Nebuchadnezzer 's dream. The first beast which was like a lion and had wings of an eagle represented Babylon. The second beast which looked like a bear represented Medo-Persia. The third beast that looked like a leopard with four wings and four heads represented the Greek empire ruled by Alexander the Great. After his death, his generals divided up his empire into four domains ruled by four kings (the four heads of the leopard): Ptolemy I ruled over Egypt and North Africa, Seleusus gained Syria and Mesopotamia, Lysimachus obtained Thrace and Asia Minor and Cassander ruled Macedonia. The fourth beast was a terrifying, frightening and powerful beast with teeth of iron and ten horns. Rome certainly fit this description as thousands were pierced with nails of iron as they were crucified. Many others were thrown to the lions or wild dogs and torn apart as entertainment in the Roman circuses.

He gave me this explanation: "The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings.

—Daniel 7:23-24

The fourth beast is the Roman Empire. The final world empire to come will be comprised of a ten nation confederacy or ten region alliance whose rulers will lend their support to an eleventh leader - the Antichrist.

> *The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.*
>
> —Revelation 17:12-13

The Antichrist will arise during Daniel's 70th week to rule over the final world empire, empowered by the alliance of ten rulers. The 3½ year (middle of *the "seven"*) reign of terror by the Antichrist will cease with the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the last seven plagues which complete the outpouring of God's wrath upon the wicked.

The beast of Revelation 13 is not portrayed as a sign in heaven but as emerging out of the sea of wicked humanity. This beast also has seven heads and ten horns, but his crowns are on his horns. Power and authority have been given to the horns. This beast symbolizes the empire and domain of the Antichrist. The ten horns are the ten kings who will relinquish their power and authority to the Antichrist (Rev 17:13). On each head was written a blasphemous name. Blasphemy can either be irreverent speech concerning God or attributing God's divine attributes to sinful man. The Jews wanted to stone Jesus because they believed that he was merely a man who claimed to be God (Jn 10:31-33). Of course Jesus was innocent of the charge of blasphemy. *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...* Col 2:9. The blasphemous names on each of the seven heads may very well be the pretentious titles that falsely proclaim the seven earthly kings to be gods or the names of kings who were worshipped as gods.

Many emperors of the past have erected images of themselves and many also have claimed to be a god. The nation of Israel was enslaved for 400 years in Egypt, the first of the world empires. Pharaoh was the title of the Egyptian kings. Egyptians believed their Pharaoh to be a god, identifying him with the Sun gods. The chief Egyptian god,

Amon-Re was thought to be embodied in Pharaoh's person. They also believed the Pharaoh to be all powerful (omnipotent) and all knowing (omniscient) - Egypt's mightiest god.

The Northern Kingdom (the territory of the ten tribes) was taken in captivity by the second of the world empires, Assyria. Tiglath-Pileser was a title of three kings of Assyria. In the original language of the Assyrians, the kingly title is *Tukultiapal-Esarra* which means - *my help is the first born of the Esharra temple* (the god Assur). Tiglath-Pileser III who took the Northern Kingdom into captivity, set up bas-reliefs (sculptures) with his royal image in many of the cities he conquered.

The third world empire to emerge was Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzer laid waste the city of Jerusalem and took many captives from the Southern Kingdom (Judah) into captivity for 70 years. While Nebuchadnezzer was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he proclaimed:

> *"Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence of my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"*
>
> —Daniel 4:30

For his haughtiness, Nebuchadnezzer was made to live with wild animals. His hair was long and unkempt, and his nails grew into claws. He was humbled until he came to acknowledge that God alone is sovereign over the kingdoms of men (Da 4:32). King Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus. King Belshazzar was a successor and descendant of King Nebuchadnezzer. Although Belshazzar knew that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men (Da 5:21), the king defied God and desecrated the sacred vessels of the temple. He did not sin out of ignorance but sinned intentionally out of pride and arrogance. Beishazzar praised idols and dishonored God during an orgy of revelry and blasphemy.

The fourth empire to emerge in world history was the Medo-Persian Empire. Darius the Mede took over the Babylonian Empire the very night that Daniel interpreted the *handwriting on the wall* (Da 5:22-28). In celebration of the Persian New Year, groups of officials

from 20 satrapies marched through Persepolis, the ceremonial capital. They paid homage to Darius and called him the king of kings.

Cyrus II was not only held in high esteem by his own people, the Persians, but also by the Greeks and others. He culled favor from the peoples he conquered by supporting their local customs and sacrificing to their local gods. Although the LORD called Cyrus by name and bestowed a title of honor upon him (Is 45:4-5), the king paid homage to Marduk and did not acknowledge the Most High.

The fifth of the world empires was established by the Greeks. Alexander the Great, because of his great accomplishments on the battlefield, became convinced of his own divinity. He was pleased to be compared to Dionysus, the god of wine and ecstasy.

The sixth of the historic empires was Rome. Caesar was the name taken by or given to all the Roman emperors after Julius Caesar. It was a title applied to the emperors named in the New Testament. Christians who held that Christ and not Caesar was Lord, were persecuted, humiliated, and many were martyred for their faith. A failure to worship Caesar or bow to his image was viewed as an act of treason against the state.

The seventh empire to come is the kingdom of the Antichrist. The man of lawlessness will blaspheme the Most High by speaking evil of God (Da 11: 36), by desecrating the temple with an image of himself (Rev 13:15) and by claiming to be divine (Da 11:37). He, like Ahab the king of Israel (1 Ki 16:30), will do more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him.

> *One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The world was astonished and followed the beast.*
>
> —Revelation 13:3

In order to deceive the masses, Satan will arrange for a feigned resurrection of the Antichrist. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound. When this fatal wound is healed, the world will be astonished and follow the Antichrist. The wound is a head wound. The body of the Antichrist is not injured. Satan cannot give life, but he can possess the body of the Antichrist and fake his resurrection.

Revelation 13:1-3: "The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne"

As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

—John 13:27

Just as Satan entered into Judas, he will enter into the body of the Antichrist in an attempt to deceive the world into believing that the Antichrist resurrected after having received a fatal wound to his head. It will be Satan himself who will be worshipped by those who receive the mark of the beast.

REVELATION 13:4-18
THE TWO BEASTS

BEFORE WE COMPLETE our study of chapter thirteen of the Book of Revelation, let us refresh our memories concerning some of the figurative speech and symbolism that we have encountered in the first twelve chapters of this apocalyptic epistle.

In chapter one of Revelation, we discovered that the seven golden lamp stands represented seven churches in the province of Asia. These local congregations were able to receive this circular letter because they were located in cities that comprised the Roman postal route of western Asia. The One whose head and hair were white like wool and whose eyes were like blazing fire was identified as Christ. The seven stars that He held in his right hand symbolized the seven guardian angels of the seven local churches.

In chapter four we presented scriptural evidence to challenge the notion that the twenty-four elders were glorified saints. Instead, the twenty-four elders who were dressed in white and who wore gold crowns on their heads were identified as a special order of angels.

In our study of chapter six of the Book of Revelation, we cross-referenced chapter six of Zechariah and Matthew chapter twenty-four to interpret the symbolic language concerning the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The white horse and rider represented the Antichrist who appears as a man of peace, although he is bent on conquest. The fiery red horse and rider coming from the east presents a picture of

war and great bloodshed. The black horse and rider comes from the north bringing famine. The pale horse's rider was named Death and Hades was following close behind him. From the south came sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts.

The 144,000 of chapter seven of Revelation are sealed on their foreheads. They are not Messianic Jews, but unregenerate men from the twelve tribes of Israel who have been marked by God declaring his ownership and protection. These 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel are not part of the church and will not take part in the Rapture at the seventh trumpet. They have been sealed to enable them to be protected from the plague of demonic locusts released from the abyss. They are the firstfruits of Israel who will serve Christ in a special capacity during his millennial reign.

In chapter eleven, we read of a description of the two witnesses. Most probably, they will be Moses and Elijah who both appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. They will prophesy during the second half of Daniel's 70th week after the idolatrous image of the beast has been erected in the temple. This statue of the Antichrist will cause the 144,000 to flee Jerusalem. Daniel refers to this image as the abomination that causes desolation.

Chapter twelve of Revelation contains the vision of the sign that appeared in heaven of a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. When we examined Joseph's dream of the sun, moon and stars bowing before him, we were able to properly identify the woman of Revelation twelve as the 144,000 who will flee to a place prepared by God in the desert during the second half of the Tribulation. The other sign that appeared in heaven was an enormous dragon with seven heads and ten horns and wearing seven crowns on his heads. The dragon is Satan and the heads wearing crowns represent the leaders of the seven evil world empires to whom he has given power and authority to rule over during the course of history.

In Revelation chapter thirteen the beast that emerges from out of the sea is a figurative representation of the final world empire that will be ruled by the Antichrist. This composite beast had seven heads and ten horns with ten crowns on his horns. There will be a confederacy

of ten kings (rulers) who will support the Antichrist with all the resources that are at their disposal. The spiritually blinded people of the world will worship the Antichrist because they will be deceived by his counterfeit resurrection.

> *One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound, but the fatal wound of the beast had been healed...*
>
> —Revelation 13:3 a

> *The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders...*
>
> —2 Thessalonians 2:9

> *For false Christs and prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible.*
>
> —Matthew 24:24

A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. The believer has already accepted the sign of Jonah - Christ has risen from the dead. It is not possible for the elect to be deceived if they study God's Word. We can be spiritually discerning by using Scripture as our rule of measure, not phenomenal events or feelings. Miracles should affirm truth in accordance to God's revelation of truth. As the day approaches, there will be increasing demonic activity and counterfeit signs and wonders.

> *Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"*
>
> —Revelation 13:4

The archangel Michael is the protector of God's chosen people. Michael and his angels fought against Satan and his demons. Satan lost his place in heaven and was cast down to earth. Michael means, "Who is like God?" Now wicked humanity turns to the Antichrist and asks, "Who is like the beast?"

Revelation 13:5-10:

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

He who has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

The Antichrist will conduct a reign of terror for the second half of the Great Tribulation. Many of God's people will fall by the sword, while others will be imprisoned.

He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

—Daniel 7:25

The saints are called to endure patiently and faithfully during a period of unparalleled persecution, but for the sake of the elect the time will be shortened (Matthew 24:22).

Revelation 13:11-14:

Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.

—Revelation 13:11

The Apostle John is shown three different beasts according to the accounts as recorded in the book of Revelation. Each of these creatures emerges from different locations. The first beast John saw was the enormous red dragon which appeared as a sign in heaven (Revelation 12:3). The second beast John saw came out of the sea. This beast resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion (Revelation 13:2).

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

—Psalm 139:15

This beast does not arise out of the sea. It does not represent a nation or its leader. This third beast is a picture of an individual born out of a woman s womb (woven together in the depths of the earth). He has the appearance of a lamb. A lamb is a gentle and meek creature. This beast had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. His appearance is deceiving.

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

—Matthew 7:15

He is the False Prophet. There have been many false prophets just as there have been many antichrists (Matthew 24:24). He will be the last and most diabolical of those who speak for Satan, the great dragon. A true prophet speaks for God. A prophet of the LORD will confirm the Word of God by miraculous signs. Moses, for example, was empowered by the LORD to do miraculous signs so that the people would believe that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had appeared to him (Exodus 4:1-9). The False Prophet will do counterfeit signs and wonders to deceive the people in the worship of a false god.

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them, "you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and all your soul.

—Deuteronomy 13:1-3

The church will be kept from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live upon the earth (Revelation 3:10). But those from the twelve tribes of Israel, who claim to love God and have not yet accepted Jesus as the Messiah, will be left on the earth to endure the hour of trial. Their love of God will be tested. The False Prophet will perform great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven (Revelation 13:13). He will be a counterfeit Elijah that prepares the way for the false Christ

Each Passover, Jews celebrate the festival by pouring out a cup of wine for Elijah and leaving their door opened. This is a symbolic gesture of their hope that he will return at Passover. Elijah was an anointed prophet of the Old Testament period of the kings. He called down fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-38). Elijah did not experience death, but was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11). It was prophesied in the last book of the Old Testament that Elijah would return before the great and dreadful day of the LORD (Malachi 4:5). I believe that the False Prophet will come at the Passover that occurs midway of Daniel's 70th week. Those from the twelve tribes of Israel will be deceived into believing that he is Elijah. At first, due to the False Prophet, natural Israel will embrace the Antichrist. Soon after, Satan will feign the Antichrist's resurrection. But when the False Prophet sets up an image of the beast to be worshiped, they will realize that he is a false prophet according to Deuteronomy 13:1-3. Those from the tribes of Israel, who will not bow before his image, will be those who love God with all their heart.

The False Prophet is part of an evil triumvirate. In ancient Rome, a triumvir was any of a group of three administrators who shared authority equally. There will be three who will rule with cruelty and without mercy over the last world empire. This triad of evil will rule

over a revived Roman Empire. Spiritually, they are an unholy trinity. They are the counterfeits of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Satan coveted worship and rebelled against God. Satan is a deceiving spirit, the father of lies (John 8:44). The Father is Spirit (John 4:24). While God the Father is the author of life (father means life giver), Satan is a murderer (life taker). Satan is the first person of the unholy trinity.

The Antichrist is the son of perdition. He is the seed of Satan and the false Christ. He is the second person of the unholy trinity. While the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to bring conviction of sin and bring people to Christ (John 16:8-11), the False Prophet persecutes the righteous and forces the masses to worship the Antichrist. He is the third person of the unholy trinity.

> *He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refuse to worship the image to be killed.*
>
> —Revelation 13:15

When the LORD God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, He breathed into his nostrils and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:7). The word for breath in both Hebrew (ruach) and in Greek (pneuma) can be translated as wind or spirit. When Jesus illustrated the spiritual concept of regeneration (spiritual birth or born again from above), He spoke of the power and invisible qualities of the wind (John 3:6-8). When the false prophet gives breath to the image of the Antichrist, he will assign an evil spirit to indwell the idol.

The name of the beast is yet to be revealed, but we can calculate the number of the Antichrist.

> *He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.*
>
> —Revelation 13:16-18

During the reign of the Antichrist, there will be a man who will perform great and miraculous signs (Revelation 13:13). He will have the authority to both force the inhabitants of the earth to worship the Antichrist and also force everyone to receive the mark of the beast. This evil enforcer is commonly referred to as the false prophet. People will either submit by taking the mark or face the prospect of imprisonment or death (Revelation 1310).

In order to determine the number of his name (the name of the Antichrist), one must calculate the number of the beast. In other words, we must assign a numerical value to each letter of the Antichrist's name and then obtain a total sum of the numbers. The sum total of all the numbers will equal 666. This cannot be done in the English language. Although we use an English letter system (the alphabet or the A, B, C's), we have a separate number system (Arabic numerals or 1, 2, 3's). On the other hand, the Bible was originally scripted in languages which did not have a separate system of symbols that represented numbers. The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew, with the exception of the 2nd to 7th chapters of Daniel which were written in Aramaic. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were penned in Greek. The letters of these languages have numerical values assigned to them. For example in Greek, the letter Alpha = 1, Beta = 2, Gamma = 3 and Nu 50. In Hebrew the letter Aleph = 1, Beth = 2, Gimel = 3 and Nun 50. The Hebrew alphabet contains twenty-two letters with five variations which are only used at the end of a word. These final consonants have values of 500 - 900. Gematria is the use of the letters of an alphabet to represent numbers. Many of us are familiar with Roman numerals. Let us determine the numerical value of the word livid using Roman Gematria:

LIVID = 50 (L) + 1 (I) + 5 (V) + 1 (I) + 500 (D) = 557.

The blasphemous name on the seventh head of the beast will be the name of the Antichrist. His mark will be 666, or the total value of the letters of his name in Hebrew or Greek.

> *... let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.*
>
> —Revelation 13:18b

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

—Genesis 1:27

Man was created in the image of God on day six of the creation week. Man's number is 6. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work (Genesis 2:2). Day six of the creation week focuses upon man, while day seven focuses upon God and the completion of His handiwork.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

—Romans 3:23

God is perfect and complete. The number seven is associated with heavenly perfection and completeness. The number seven is used 55 times in the book of Revelation. The golden lampstand (Exodus 25:3 1-40) that stood in the Holy Place (the place where the priests ministered in the tabernacle and in the temple) had seven lamps which represented the seven spirits (some translations: sevenfold spirit) of God.

Then I saw a Lamb looking as - it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

—Revelation 5:6

The number seven represents heavenly perfection and completeness, while the number six represents sinful man who is imperfect and incomplete. The number 666 symbolizes the fact that man falls short, body, soul and spirit of the glory of God. The Antichrist exemplifies the sinfulness of mankind. He is totally corrupt and debase. The son of hell is carnal minded, blasphemous and in spiritual darkness. He is the bond servant of Satan. The number of his name is 666. The term antichrist can be defined to mean against Christ or false Christ. The Antichrist will be against all righteousness and truth. He also will be a great liar and deceiver.

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

—2 Corinthians 11:14-15

His end will be what his actions deserve - he, along with the false prophet, will be cast into the fiery lake of burning sulfur for eternity (Revelation 19:20).

REVELATION 14:1-13
"THE LAMB, THE 144,000 AND THE THREE ANGELS"

Revelation 14:1-3

> *Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.*

THE 144,000 WHO had the name of the Lamb and his Father's name written on their foreheads were not seen in heaven. They appeared standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. The Father's name was written on the foreheads of the 144,000 along with the name of the Lamb. In this passage of Scripture the focus is not on the personality of Jesus as the second person of the Trinity (He is not called the Son), but as the Lamb who was slain. The emphasis is upon the role of Christ as the agent of salvation. The location of this prophetic picture is the temple mount where Jesus will establish his earthly reign during the Millennium. The 144,000 will not take part in the rapture of the church. They are not gathered from the four winds (Mt 24:31) or caught up to meet the Lord in the air (2 Thes 4:16-17), but are redeemed from the earth. The 144,000 are

called servants of God in chapter seven and verse three of the Book of Revelation. They will serve Christ on earth for a thousand years. Whereas the church has received the redemption of their bodies at the rapture, those from the nation of Israel that survive through the Tribulation will not receive their glorified bodies until the White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium.

There are scholars who interpret this reference to Mount Zion as the New Jerusalem or heaven. This interpretation of the passage is problematic because the sound like that of harpists playing their harps does not emanate from Mount Zion but thundered from heaven. The 144,000 sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. Just as our prayers come before the throne of God (Rev 8:3), so did this new song that was sung on Mount Zion by the 144,000. I believe that this song is a song of praise and thanksgiving for redemption by those who were sealed on their foreheads. The four living creatures and the elders could not learn this new song because angels have never personally experienced blood-bought redemption.

Leviticus 17:11states that the life of the creature is in the blood. Blood sacrifice was established in Israel to make atonement but was only a temporary covering for sin. The sacrificial system foreshadowed the redemptive offering of the blood of the Lamb that would take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). Jesus purchased men for God by his own blood (Rev 5:9).

"While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I, myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'"

A ghost is a disembodied spirit. Physical death is the separation of soul and spirit from the body. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and then to the eleven in a glorified body. He did not say that He had flesh and blood, but declared that a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as He has. Jesus' blood was poured out on the altar to make atonement for sin and to pay the price of redemption. Angelic bodies are not corruptible.

They do not die a physical death. Unlike the creature that depends on blood for life, angels are bloodless, spirit beings. There is no plan of redemption for angels that sin. Lucifer and the angels who rebelled against God were confirmed in sin for eternity. Lucifer whose name means light-bearer became Satan the adversary. The fallen angels are now known as demons. The angels, who did not rebel against God with Lucifer or abandon their home (Jude 6), were confirmed in righteousness and are known as holy angels. None of the angelic host could learn the new song sung by the 144,000 because none could sing a song of thanksgiving for personally experienced blood redemption.

> *These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.*
>
> —Revelation 14:4-5

According to Mosaic Law (Leviticus 15:16-17) a man who has an emission of semen must bathe his whole body with water and is considered unclean until evening. In biblical times, the ceremonially unclean were excluded from the camp (the area around the tabernacle and courtyard), when the Israelites lived in tents. Later, no unclean person was allowed in the temple area where he could mingle and defile others. If the 144,000 are identified as symbolizing the church, they would be comprised of both men and women. The possibility of the church being defiled with women as a way of keeping pure is illogical. If, on the other hand, the 144,000 are identified as devout Israelites who participate in the sacrifices and offerings when the third temple is built, then the fact that are ceremonially clean is easily understood. There is also a spiritual level of interpretation of the passage. The passage can also be understood as the 144,000 being spiritual virgins because they have not followed other gods.

The 144,000 are offered to God as firstfruits. Jesus arose on the Feast of Firstfruits. Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Co 15:23). The church is not considered firstfruits but is figuratively referred to as the wheat harvest. The 144,000 are ethnically descended from the twelve tribes of Jacob. There are 144,000 from each of the

twelve tribes and are the firstfruits of Israel's corporate national redemption that occurs at the return of Christ on of Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement). No lie was found in their mouths.

> *"The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who nave not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."*
>
> —2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

The servants of God are not deluded into the worship of the Antichrist as are those who have taken the mark of the beast. The wicked have rejected the truth and have been marked by the beast on their right hand or forehead. The 144,000 have the name of God and the Lamb on their forehead. The wicked are guilty of spiritual fornication, while the 144,000 are spiritual virgins and ceremonially clean. The wicked believe the lie, while no lie was found in the mouths of Gods servants. The 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever He goes, while those marked with the number of his name follow the beast. The 144,000 sing the song of redemption and will glory in eternal reward, while the wicked will cry out in agony as they suffer eternal torment. The wicked are condemned for their sinful state, while the 144,000 are blameless as they have been imputed the righteousness of God in Christ.

> *Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."*
>
> —Revelation 14:6-7

When Jesus heard that John had been cast into prison, Jesus left Nazareth and returned to the Galilee to live in Capernaum. John had been preaching a baptism of repentance. After John's imprisonment,

Jesus began to preach, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Mt 4:12-17).

> *Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues preaching the good news of the kingdom.*
>
> —Matthew 4:23a

Jesus began his public ministry with the same message that John had been preaching. Prior to the crucifixion of Christ, the gospel of the kingdom was proclaimed. The gospel or "good news" that was proclaimed was the message that turning from sin would be rewarded by admission into the kingdom of heaven. The first coming of Christ was marked by his atoning death and resurrection. Accepting Christ's substitutionary death on the cross means resurrection to eternal life for the born again believer.

> *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come."*
>
> —Matthew 24:14

After nearly two thousand years of personal missionary work, the gospel is now being broadcast by radio, television and over the Internet to every corner of the globe. The Bible has been translated into every major language and many dialects.

The first of the three angels of Revelation chapter fourteen proclaims the eternal gospel to every nation, tribe, language and people. This first angel's message is heard by all peoples of the earth. Mankind is exhorted to worship God who has created the heavens and the earth. All of the earth's inhabitants are warned that the "hour" of God's judgment is at hand.

> *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*
>
> —Genesis 1:1

The first revelation of God to mankind as revealed in the Scriptures is the fact that God is the creator of all things.

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.
—Romans 1:25

The lie that wicked mankind has accepted is that God is not the Creator! The belief in the lie is evidenced by their worship and service of created things. Evolution is based upon so-called "natural science." The premise of natural science is that only things that can be measured and observed are considered in theories of origin. Natural science embraces the "Theory of Evolution". God is rejected as Creator because Spirit cannot be observed or measured with the five natural senses. The basis of evolutionary theory is that; lifeless matter, without design or guidance, organized itself into living organisms. Through a process of natural selection resulting in beneficial mutations, evolutionists believe that life evolved from a simple cell to complex forms over long periods of time.

No one has ever witnessed a beneficial mutation. A beneficial mutation by definition is an oxymoron. Mutation means a loss of information. To evolve to a higher life form would mean a gain of information within the nucleus of a cell. For non-living matter to organize into a state of living matter would require an increase of information that only could be provided by external intelligent input and design. Those who believe in mindless evolution contend that; given a long enough period of time, life could organize itself by chance. Their premise is that inorganic matter could eventually evolve into organic matter over the course of billions of years. One plus one equals two. Even given billions of years of time, one plus one will never equal three. There is no such thing as a simple cell. One strand of DNA can encode more information than a set of encyclopedias. In order to have a living cell there must be a number of functioning mechanisms operating together. A living cell is a complex unit of protoplasm that has a cell membrane, nucleus and cytoplasm. These parts of a cell could not evolve independently. In order to have a living cell, all parts must exist at the same time and function interactively.

Man in rejection of the knowledge of God as Creator has embraced evolution. It is the religion of secular-humanists. The atheist declares that man is evolving to a higher level of consciousness. The Antichrist will epitomize the concept of the New Age Messiah. Those who

embrace the lie will believe that the Antichrist is a man who has evolved spiritually and has become god. While the Scriptures declare that the Son of God has condescended and has humbled himself to take on the form of a servant (God becoming man), the secular humanists will believe that man has become divine. They will worship the creature instead of the Creator. The first angel declares to the inhabitants of the earth a proclamation to worship the One who is the creator of all things.

> *"Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth."*
>
> —Revelation 3:10

> *"If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints."*
>
> —Revelation 13:10

Those who have patiently endured during the 42 month period of the reign of terror of the Antichrist will be kept from the hour of trial that is to come upon all who live on earth. The first angel proclaims, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come." The hour of God's judgment is in response to the wickedness of mankind and their worship of the beast. The church is raptured as the Lord, for the sake of the elect, shortens their days on earth. The church is kept from the hour of God's trial, not from the persecution of the saints by the beast. The hour of God's trial is not the 42 months or 3 ½ year period that the beast successfully wars against the saints. The Scofield Reference Bible commentary on Revelation 3:10 incorrectly interprets the hour of trial as the entire period of the Great Tribulation. It is clear from the proclamation of the first angel that the hour of God's wrath comes towards the end of the Great Tribulation. The hour of trial is not seven years long.

> *"A second angel followed and said, 'Fallen! Fallen Babylon the Great, which made the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."*
>
> —Revelation 14:8

Babylon is identified in Revelation 18:10 as a city. This city is the headquarters of the one-world false religion of the final world empire. Babylon is the mother of prostitutes and abominations of the earth (Rev 17:5). Wicked mankind embraces the Antichrist and rejects God as Creator. These men prefer darkness and hate the light because their deeds are evil (Jn 3:19-20). Every woman of ancient Babylon had to serve for a time as a temple prostitute. Babylon symbolizes both physical prostitution and spiritual prostitution (idolatry). We will study "Babylon the Mother of Harlots" in greater detail in chapters seventeen and eighteen of the Book of Revelation.

> *A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."*
>
> —Revelation 14:9-11

Those who receive the mark of the beast are eternally lost. There are those who falsely teach that final punishment is annihilation. They claim that the unrighteous suffer punishment in the Lake of Fire for a time, then are destroyed and cease to exist. This view flies in the face of these verses which declare that the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.

> *This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."*
>
> —Revelation 14:12-13

For the saints to endure and remain faithful is the exhortation of this verse and a basic theme throughout the Book of Revelation. Over the centuries true followers of Christ have suffered persecution and martyrdom.

> *"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven..."*
>
> —Matthew 5:11-12

REVELATION 14:14-20
THE SHARP SICKLES

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

—Revelation 14:14-16

THE TERM *SON of Man* is the most common title that Jesus applied to himself. This expression which emphasizes the humanity of Christ is found 81 times in the Gospel accounts and is never used by anyone else but by the Lord himself. Daniel 7:13 speaks of one "like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven. This One was led into the presence of the Ancient of Days. When Jesus was questioned by Caiaphas the high priest, Caiaphas said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" (Mt 26:63). Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say." When Jesus continued by prophesying that all would see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven, the high priest tore his clothes and cried, "He has spoken blasphemy" (Mt 26:64-65). The one "like a son of man" described in Revelation is wearing a crown of gold which symbolizes

his power and authority. The Messiah will be enthroned as ruler over all the earth. The Son of Man will rule over the sons of men.

The angel that emerges from the heavenly temple is a messenger that has received instructions from God the Father. This angel calls out to Jesus in a loud voice and announces that the time has come for the harvest. Although Jesus is in very nature God (Php 2:6), He laid aside his glory and humbly submitted to the Father by becoming man (Php 2:8). As God, Jesus is omnipotent and omniscient (He is fully God). But when Jesus walked the earth at his first coming, He limited himself by entering the realm of time and space (He is fully man). In his humanity, Jesus proclaimed the following concerning the second coming:

> *No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*
>
> —Matthew 24:36

The New Moon (the start of every Jewish month) is the most pivotal date in the Hebrew Calendar. Without the New Moon, we could not have any of the Jewish Holidays. All the Jewish Holidays revolve around the date of the New Moon. The New Moon tells us which day is the first of the month. In order to confirm a Rosh Chodesh (a new moon/ a new month), there must be two witnesses in Jerusalem that sight the first sliver of the new moon. The witnesses then would report it to the Sanhedrin the following morning.

When the Lord returns the sun will be darkened like sack cloth and the moon will not give its light, it will appear like dark blood. The atmosphere will be so thick with dust, smoke and ash that the new moon will not be able to be sighted nor will the sunrise or sunset be observed. Therefore, no man will know the day or hour bur the Lord has told us of the signs of his return and we will know the season of his coming.

Then another angel came out of the temple...

In this passage, this angel emerges from the presence of the Father in the temple to announce to the Son of Man that the time has come for him to judge the earth.

Let the nations be roused; let them advance to the Valley of Jehosphaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come trample the grapes for the winepress is full and the vats overflow — so great is their wickedness!
—Joel 3:12-13

The Son of Man not only returns in power and authority but in victory. The crown of gold that He wears is a victory wreath. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron and dash them to pieces like pottery (Psalm 2:9).

Jesus is Lord of the harvest. He is pictured holding a sharp sickle. The Israelite sickle that was used for cutting grain was usually a flint or iron blade that was attached to a curved shaft of wood or bone. The early (or spring) harvest was celebrated during the Feast of Firstfruits. Each year after the nation of Israel entered into the Promised Land, every Israelite male was to bring a sheaf of grain to the priest to be presented as a wave offering to the LORD in the temple on the day following the Sabbath. Along with the firstfruits of the gain harvest, a lamb was to be offered as a burnt offering together with flour mixed with oil and a drink offering of wine (Leviticus 23:9-13).

Jesus arose from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits. He resurrected early on Sunday morning - the day following the Sabbath of the Passover week (the day of Passover is also a Sabbath). Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection (lCo 15:23). The offerings commanded by the LORD not only included the wave offering of grain, but also a lamb given as a burnt offering, A burnt offering is an atonement offering and is totally consumed. The burnt offering was to be presented together with flour and oil. Flour and oil offered on an altar heated by flaming coals would bake those ingredients into unleavened bread. Unleavened bread along with the drink offering of wine comprise the elements of the sacrament of communion. All the aspects of the offerings that were to be presented on the Feast of Firstfruits symbolize Christ.

The spring harvest of barley was followed by the summer wheat harvest. The next festival of the LORD is the Feast of Weeks. This feast is also known as Pentecost (meaning fifty days) and closes with the Day of Firstfruits. From the day after the Sabbath when the wave offering of barley was offered in the temple, seven full weeks were to

be counted. The next day following the seventh Sabbath (the fiftieth day), an offering of two loaves baked from the firstfruits of the wheat harvest was presented (Lev 23:15-17). The wheat harvest symbolizes the ingathering of the church (Jn 4:35-38). This offering does not include unleavened bread which symbolizes the sinless Christ; but instead, two leavened loaves are offered. The two loaves are a picture of Jew and Gentile in Messiah. The loaves contain leaven because saved sinners still sin (1Jn 1:8). Hopefully, the picture of risen wheat flour offered to God portrays saints full of the Spirit and not puffed with pride. The church was empowered by the Spirit on Pentecost. Pentecost is the day of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. The harvest of this summer grain is not completed until the fall. The completion of the wheat harvest is a picture of the Rapture.

Immediately following the summer harvest of wheat, the grapes were harvested in the early fall. The grapes were cut in clusters off the vine and then tread out in a winepress.

> *Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe." The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.*
>
> —Revelation 14:17-20

Another angel emerges from the temple and he too has a sharp sickle in his hand. This sickle is to be used to cut the clusters of grapes from the vine. The context suggests that this angel is carrying a smaller grape-knife. Jesus uses a scythe to gather his wheat into his barn, but the grapes are cut and cast into the winepress of God's fury.

> *Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."*

Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing.

For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."
—Isaiah 63:1-3

Edom symbolizes the enemies of God and of God's people. The Edomites were descendants of Esau who despised his birthright. Esau was the eldest and therefore was entitled to his father Issac s estate. But Esau was selfish and did not want to bear the responsibilities that come along with the inheritance. Men reject God's graceful offer to inherit the kingdom of heaven because they do not want to turn from their selfish desires. Esau's name means *hairy.* He was also called Edom which means *red.* Those, like Esau who rejected God's provision, remain in their sin. Their sins are like scarlet and their trespasses are like crimson (Isa 1:18). Edom means red which is the color that symbolizes sin. Sinners serve the red dragon (Satan) and are stained with sin. Bozrah was an important city of Edom. This city's name means grape-gathering. The mighty and righteous Christ will trodden down the winepress of God's wrath until his garments are stained with the blood of the unrighteous. As the garments of one who troddens down the grapes in a winepress is splattered with grape juice, so shall the Son of Man's garments be stained red with the blood of those who are stained with sin.

Outside of the city of Jerusalem will the wicked be trampled in God's vat of judgment. The blood will flow as high as a horse's bridle (approximately four feet deep) for a distance of 1,600 stadia (about 185 miles). This distance represents the entire length of Israel from the northernmost city of Dan, to the southernmost city of Beer-Sheba.

For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled

that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."
—Isaiah 63:4-6

In the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah and read from chapter 61. He proclaimed that He was the Anointed One – the Messiah. He was sent to preach good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to announce freedom for the captives and to release prisoners from darkness. After Jesus proclaimed the year of the LORD's favor, He stopped reading in the middle of verse 2, rolled up the scroll and sat down. He never finished the verse, *and the day of vengeance of our God*...That day will be when He returns on a white horse.

My eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. He has trampled out the vintage were the grapes of wrath are stored. He has loosed the faithful lightning of his terrible swift sword. His truth is marching on ...
—The Battle Hymn of the Republic

REVELATION 15:1
THE COMPLETION OF GOD'S WRATH

I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues – last, because with them God's wrath is completed.
—Revelation 15:1

IN ORDER TO properly interpret prophetic passages in the Bible that relate to the events concerning the *confirmation of the covenant* spoken of by Daniel (the last seven years of this age - see Dan 9:27; Mt 24:15), we must make a distinction between the term, *God's wrath* and the term, *the completion* or *outpouring* of *God's wrath.*

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.
—John 3:36

This passage from the Gospel of John declares that God's wrath remains (was already on and continues to be), on the person who has rejected the Son of God. This person will not see life. Since the person is already physically alive in order to reject Christ, the life spoken of in this passage relates to *spiritual life.* The person who rejects the Son of God is rejecting God's provision for salvation - the payment for sin through the substitutionary sacrifice of God's Son on the cross. To understand the Biblical concepts of God's wrath and spiritual life, we must examine passages of Scripture relating to sin (missing the

mark or the falling short of God's perfection by breaking God's laws). God's wrath remains on those who remain in a state of sin.

> *... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
>
> —Romans 3:23

> *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*
>
> —Psalm 51:5

We are separated from God from the moment of conception. This state is eternal for those individuals who reject Chris: *For the wages of sin is death...* Romans 6:23a

At birth, we emerge physically alive but spiritually dead. We are conceived in sin (we are children of Adam, the federal head of the human race, and bear the stain of original sin).

> *Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear.*
>
> —Isaiah 59:1-2

We are all sinners. Sin's penalty is spiritual death or separation from God. God's wrath remains on the sinner who rejects the Son of God. The person remains in a state of spiritual death. They will not see life. They will remain separated from God for eternity. God's wrath remains on them.

> *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*
>
> —1 John 5:12

A sinner is spiritually dead, separated from God and under God's wrath. This sinner can be made spiritually alive, be reconciled to God and under the blessings of God through faith in Jesus Christ. This new spiritual life is identified by the term, *born again*. In the Gospel of John, chapter 3 and verses 1-21, a man named Nicodemus comes

to see Jesus privately at night. I believe that he came at night because he did not want to be seen. He was a member of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin. He was a Pharisee; which meant that, he was a member of the most religious sect of those living in Jerusalem. The Pharisees believed in the truth of the Scriptures, the actuality of the spirit realm and of angels, and of the miraculous. This man lived by the Law of Moses. He followed all the ceremonial laws and observed all the holidays. When he came to Jesus he said that we know (the Pharisees), that you are a teacher who has come from God. Nicodemus believed that Jesus performed miracles by the authority and power of God. Yet when Jesus replied to him, Jesus spoke of the need to be born again. Jesus, being in very nature God, knew what was in a man s heart (John 2:25).

Nicodemus, even though very religious, was uncertain of his eternal destiny. This account clarifies his misunderstanding of what born again means. Nicodemus had questioned, "How can a man be born when he is old?", "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus explained and gave an illustration of spiritual birth (being born again from above). The first birth is a natural or physical birth. To be born again is to be given life by the Spirit of God. Jesus explained that the Holy Spirit (the third person of the Godhead), is powerful and unseen - like the wind. To believe in the Son of God is to believe: the second person of the Godhead came down from heaven, born of a virgin, took our sins upon himself, died on the cross, rose on the third day and sent the Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of believers.

> *When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*
>
> —I Corinthians 2:1-2

When Paul brought the *Good News* or *Gospel* to the church at Corinth, he proclaimed the testimony about God in simple terms. The Good News is that we no longer have to be under the wrath of God. To be born again is to know Christ and him crucified. Christ called out on the cross, *"It is finished."* He had come to do the will of

the Father. Jesu had fulfilled the purpose of his coming. Jesus before going to the cross had prayed this prayer:

> *Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*
>
> —Luke 22:42

It was the Father's will that Jesus drink the cup of the Father's wrath. To be born again is to be made spiritually alive because the penalty of sin (spiritual death), was paid in full on the cross. When we ask Jesus for forgiveness of our sins and invite Him to dwell in our hearts, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30), and we are reconciled to the Father (2 Co 5:18-19). Our body has become a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Co 6:19).

Now that we have established a Scriptural basis for our definition of *God's wrath* - the eternal state of separation from God due to sin; we now shall examine the term, *the completion of God's wrath.* The completion of God's wrath is a onetime event that takes place during a specific period of time. Scripture clearly informs us when God's wrath shall be completed:

> *I saw... seven angels with the seven last plagues - last because with them God's wrath is completed.*
>
> —Revelation 15:1

God's wrath is completed with the outpouring of the bowl judgments - the pouring out of the seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God (Rev 15:7), on the earth. This event takes place directly after the first harvest of the earth (Rev 14:116). Jesus fulfilled the spring cycle of Biblical festivals. He rose on the Feast of Firstfruits. This festival was held at the start of the barley harvest. The church received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This festival also included a day of Firstfruits, but this was the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. Jesus used the term wheat harvest to symbolize the rapture of the church (John 4:35). This harvest of the earth described in Revelation (chapter14), is followed immediately by the harvest symbolized by grapes. The end of the wheat harvest was followed by the grape harvest. The removing of the church (wheat harvest), from the earth is

followed by the punishment of the wicked on the earth (the trampling out of the vintage of the grapes - Rev 14:20).

> *Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly bodies shaken.*
>
> —Matthew 24:29

There is a rare phenomenon of four consecutive total lunar eclipses, known as a tetrad. There have been no tetrads for over four hundred years. When the moon is in full eclipse it appears to be a dark red color like blood. There were four blood red moons right after Israel became a nation in 1948. In 1949 on Passover and Succoth and again in 1950 on Passover and Succoth, there were lunar eclipses. In the last century, the last time that four blood red moons occurred together was in 1967 and 1968 when Jerusalem was recaptured by Israel. During this century, the only string of four consecutive blood moons will occur in the spring of 2014 and 2015 on Passover and in the fall of 2014 and 2015 on the Feast of Tabernacles.

In addition to the signs of the moon turning to blood, the sun also will not give its light. There will be two solar eclipses on Rosh Hashanah, the first day of the seventh Hebrew month which marks the civil New Year. Both of these take place in the 2014-2015 year.

To summarize, on the first day of the Hebrew ceremonial calendar in 2014, there will be a lunar eclipse marking the Passover in the spring. Then there will be a solar eclipse in the fall on the Feast of Trumpets followed by another lunar eclipse 15 days later on the Succoth (the Feast of Tabernacles). This pattern will be repeated in the year 2015 for a total of 4 lunar eclipses (blood moons) and two solar eclipses (the sun being darkened). These six signs will occur on major Festivals of Yahweh.

Signs in the heavens have marked the rebirth of the nation of Israel and the recapture of the holy city of Jerusalem. What will these signs to come signify? I believe they will be the heavenly signs of the Second Coming of the Son of Man.

In the verses that follow the description of the heavenlies, *the Sign of the Son of Man* appears in the sky. The *Sign of the Son of Man* will be easily recognized by Christians. I believe that it may be a cross in

the sky. In Luke's Gospel, we are told that there will be signs in the sun, moon and stars.

> *When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*
>
> —Luke 21:28

The Lord has given the Word of God for enlightenment; so that, we are informed and encouraged. According to the words of Jesus, the members of His body (the church), will be on earth to see the heavens shaken. Scripture tells us that after the distress of those days will the heavens be shaken and the Sign of the Son of Man appear in the sky. When we see these things occur, we are to look up because our redemption is drawing near. In order to look up and see events taking place in the sky above, it can be logically concluded that the elect are still on earth.

The elect are not subject to God's wrath but will remain on earth until the outpouring of God's wrath on the earth. The saints of God will be persecuted and many martyred before the church is raptured. Those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus will suffer greatly during the reign of the Antichrist (Rev 12:17).

> *The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself... He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed...*
>
> —Daniel 11:36

The outpouring of God's wrath signals the end of the power of the Antichrist, the church is removed from the earth and the wicked suffer as a result of the seven last plagues. The seventh trumpet is sounded just prior to the time of the completion of God's wrath.

> *The seventh angel sounded his trumpet... And the 24 elders ... fell on their faces and worshipped God saying "We give thanks to you, Lord God ... because you have begun to reign... your wrath has come... The time has come for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints ...*
>
> —Revelation 11:15-18

The *completion of God's wrath* occurs during a specific time period. It commences at the seventh trumpet. The *Great and Terrible Day of the LORD* is a day of rejoicing for the raptured church and a day of calamity for those subject to the bowls of God's wrath poured out on the earth.

REVELATION 15:1-16:21
SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

Revelation 15:1

I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed.

IN OUR LAST study of the Book of Revelation, we presented scriptural evidence that supports the notion that there is a clear distinction between the term - *God's Wrath* and the term - *The Completion* or *The Outpouring of God's Wrath*. God's wrath is eternal punishment. The wicked are eternally separated from God because they have spurned Christ. They are not condemned because they have sinned (it is in a sinner's nature to sin), but because they have rebelled against God by willfully rejecting God's gracious offer of redemption. God's wrath remains on whoever rejects God's Son (John 3:36). On the other hand, the Completion of God's Wrath or The Outpouring of God's Wrath is a future event that occurs at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. It is a unique event in history that takes place when iniquity is at its full. It is marked by the outpouring of the seven bowls of wrath upon the earth and on the earth's wicked inhabitants.

"The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He

will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.

—Daniel 11:36

The Antichrist will be successful in his campaign of terror against the saints until the time that God's wrath is completed. Both the prophecy in the Book of Daniel and the proclamation in the Book of Revelation speak of the intense persecution of the saints until the outpouring of God's wrath that takes place at the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

Revelation 15:2-3

And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.

The prophet Isaiah tells us that the wicked are like the tossing sea whose waves cast up mire and mud. God declares that there is no peace for the wicked (Isaiah 57:20-21). With the release of the seven angels with the seven last plagues, the church is caught up in the air to forever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Those pictured in the heavenly throne room had been victorious over the beast. They had refused to worship him or take his mark. Some had been imprisoned for their refusal (Revelation 13:10), while others had not loved their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11). The saints enter into eternal rest, while there is no rest for the wicked. The wicked are like the tossing sea, while the saints are like a serene sea of glass. The sea is mixed with fire because the saints have been purified through the baptism of fire.

John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

—Luke 3:16

Those who had been victorious over the beasts held harps that were given to them by God. The victorious saints sang the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. God's marvelous deeds and great faithfulness inspired the heavenly chorus of praise. Not only did God inspire adoration, but He also provided the means to worship by giving the saints instruments of praise. God is indeed sovereign! The song of Moses recalls the great deliverance of God's chosen people from Egypt – natural deliverance. The song of the Lamb rejoices in Christ's triumph over his enemies in securing spiritual deliverance. The Lord saves to the uttermost!

Revelation 15:4

> *Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."*

All nations will come and worship before the Lord during his millennial reign on earth.

> *Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.*
>
> —Zechariah14:16

The Lord instituted the New Covenant in his blood during the first of the Levitical Feasts (Passover). During the Millennium, all the nations will partake in the last of the seven Feasts of the LORD - The Feast of Tabernacles. The Passover prefigured the reconciliation of men to God through the blood of the Lamb. The Feast of Tabernacles, which is a week of celebration of the harvest, symbolizes the restoration of joyful fellowship with God. After the final battle of Armageddon, there will be survivors who will enter into the Millennium. The prophecy of the nations coming before the Lord to worship occurs after the seventh trumpet is sounded. There is need for a period of time prior to the eternal kingdom for these prophecies to be literally fulfilled.

Revelation 15:5-8

After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

The tabernacle or tent of the Testimony predated the temple built by Solomon. It was the dwelling place of God during the wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness. It was called the tabernacle of the Testimony because it contained the two tablets of the Law. No one will be able to enter into the heavenly temple until the seven angels complete their task of pouring out the seven last plagues on the earth. The temple fills with smoke which represents the power and glory of the Almighty.

Revelation 16:1-2

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth." The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn — both men and animals — and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.

—Exodus 12:12

God brought judgment upon all the gods of Egypt. Unlike the Hebrews who had full beards, those who served as priests in Egypt shaved their heads and faces. The Egyptian priests were not to have any blemishes. God smote the priests who served the Egyptian gods with boils. The saints are a holy nation and a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Those who take the mark of the beast are an unholy nation and

a demonic priesthood. The first bowl causes ugly and painful sores to break out on those who worship the beast.

Revelation 16:3-7

The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died. The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."

The Egyptians worshipped Hapi, the Nile god.

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt —over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs — and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars."
—Exodus 7:19

Egypt is a type of the sinful, idolatrous world. They worshipped gods of wood and stone. At the second trumpet, a third of the sea turned to blood. Now the destruction is complete. As in Egypt when all the sources of water turned to blood, now the earth and its seas are struck by the plague of blood.

God is just in his judgments — eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and blood for blood. They will drink blood because they have shed the blood of the saints and of God's two witnesses who had prophesied for 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3).

Revelation 16:8-11

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into

darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

The Egyptians worshipped Re, the Sun god. God smote Egypt with a plague of darkness. Now the sun first scorches with intense heat and then the kingdom of the beast is plunged into darkness. The plagues of the fourth and fifth bowls do not motivate the ungodly to repent. Like the Pharaoh of Egypt, their hearts just become more hardened.

Revelation 16:12-16

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Now the great river Euphrates is dried up to prepare the way for the 200,000,000 riding on horseback that come from the Far East. This river is 1,740 miles (2,800 km) long. The Euphrates is the largest river in Southwest Asia, it rises in Turkey and flows southeast across Syria and through Iraq where it joins the Tigris River. The construction of the Euphrates Dam, also called the Tabaqah Dam in Syria, was begun in 1968 and was completed in 1973. The Atàturk Dam on the Euphrates River in southeastern Turkey is the centerpiece of the Southeastern Anatolia Project. The Ataturk Dam is the largest in a series of 22 dams and 19 hydroelectric stations built on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in the 1980s and '90s in order to provide irrigation water and hydroelectricity to arid southeastern Turkey. The systems of dams in Turkey along with the Euphrates Dam in Syria have the ability to literally dry up the Euphrates River.

The Egyptians worshipped Hekt, a frog-headed goddess. There was a plague of frogs in Egypt. The spirits of the demons that looked like frogs go to stir up the kings of the world to gather together for the final battle at Armageddon.

Revelation 16:17-21

> *The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.*

The Dead Sea Fault System (DSFS) is one of the largest continental strike-slip faults in the world. As the transform plate boundary between the Arabian and African plates, the Dead Sea Fault System represents a key tectonic feature in the eastern Mediterranean region. The Dead Sea fault zone is known to have produced several relatively large historical earthquakes. This fault zone lies between the Turkey-Arabia and Africa-Arabia tectonic plates. In other words, there is a 4,000 mile area from Turkey in Eurasia through the Middle East into North Africa that has the potential to produce such a severe earthquake that none like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth. The prophecies of a 200 million man army from the east, the drying up of the Euphrates River and the largest earthquake in recorded history can all be literally fulfilled in our own lifetime.

Jesus defeated death and the grave at the cross. He said, "It is finished." He had won the spiritual battle. Now with the destruction of Babylon the Great and the outpouring of the seven bowls of wrath upon the earth, the voice from heaven's throne declares, "It is done!" The natural battle has been won and the reign of Antichrist is over. Jesus remains seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High until the nations have been made his footstool (Hebrews 10:13). With

the greatest earthquake in history, every island flees away and every mountain is made low to prepare for the coming of the Lord. The great plague of hail, mixed with blood and fire of Egypt's day pales in comparison with the hundred pound hailstones that fall at the outpouring of the seventh bowl of God's wrath.

The Exodus and judgments upon the gods of Egypt is a type of the events to take place during the latter part of Daniel's 70th week. The Hebrews worked amongst their Egyptian slave masters during the time of the plagues. Even on the night that the first born were struck down, anyone who would submit to the God of Israel and come into a home where the blood of the lamb was applied could avoid the wrath of God. Not until the children of Israel departed Egypt and crossed through the Red Sea was there a separation between the people of God and those appointed to the outpouring of God's wrath. The crossing of the Red Sea was a type of the rapture. The drowning of the armies of Pharaoh was a type of the pouring out of the bowls of wrath upon the earth. Both events took place in the same day as will occur on the Great and Terrible Day of the LORD when the church is raptured as God pours out his wrath upon the earth. It is not an event separated by seven years or even seven days but takes place at the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

REVELATION 17: 1-18
THE WOMAN ON THE BEAST

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."

—Revelation 17:1-2

"ONE OF THE angels who had the seven bowls..." gives us a time reference for this passage of Scripture. Since the bowls of God's wrath have already started to be poured out upon the earth, the punishment of the great prostitute is to take place as the seven last plagues - last, because with them God's wrath is completed, inflict the inhabitants of the earth at the end of Daniel's 70th week.

Historical Babylon, the world empire, sat upon many waters. Nebuchadnezzar took Judah into captivity and ruled an empire that was bounded by the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. This historical political power was a type and shadow of the final one world government that is to come to power before the end of the age. Every native female of Babylon was compelled to attend the Temple of Venus at least once in order to prostitute herself in honor of the goddess. The adulteries of Babylon were both physical and spiritual.

... "The inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." As Christians we are exhorted to not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, we are urged to be filled with the Spirit. Jesus warns us of the punishment to come in the account of the wicked servant of Matthew 24:45-51 who eats and drinks with drunkards. The master will come on a day the servant does not expect him, cut him to pieces and assign a place with the hypocrites. Drunkenness and fornications, either natural or spiritual, lead to eternal damnation.

Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

—Revelation 17:3

Revelation 12 describes an enormous red dragon that came as a sign out of heaven. This scarlet beast had seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. The symbolism concerning the scarlet beast is revealed in Revelation 17:9-10, ". . . The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five are fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while." When John was given the revelation of Jesus Christ, Rome was the reigning world empire. We know, based upon the dreams and visions of Daniel that the final world empire will be a successor to the Roman Empire. Peter writing in his first epistle wrote to, "She who is in Babylon" in reference to the city of Rome. Rome is noted for its seven hills.

At the time of John's exile, there had been five former world empires. With the understanding that the Bible centers around one geographical location, Jerusalem and God's Chosen people, Israel, we can easily identify those empires. The Hebrews had been in bondage in Egypt for 400 years under the Pharaohs. After the rule of Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided. The Northern Kingdom of Israel comprised of the Ten Tribes was conquered by Assyria, while over a century later the southern Kingdom of Judah was taken into captivity by Babylon for 70 years. The Medes and the Persians overthrew the Babylonian Empire to become world rulers until they were conquered by Alexander the Great and then the Grecian Empire

became supreme. The empires which had fallen were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. One still was in power while John was alive – Rome. There is a world empire that still is yet to come. This will be the one world empire in power during Daniel's 70th week. It will be ruled by the king who exalts himself and claims to be god, the Antichrist.

Crowns are symbolic of power and authority. Each king, every head of the beast, was wearing a crown. Each empire had world dominion for a time.

In Revelation chapter 13 we are given a different description of the beast. This beast was not a sign out of heaven but came out of the sea. It did not have a body of a dragon but resembled a leopard with the feet of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power. He had ten horns and seven heads with ten crowns on his horns.

This composite beast is the last of the world empires. Its physical boundaries will encompass all the territories of the past beasts that came out of the sea, as revealed in the book of Daniel. The lion; Babylon, the bear; Medo-Persia, the leopard; Greece and the terrifying beast; Rome had authority and ruled from what is now known as Europe, the Middle East, Northern Africa and Western Asia. The Middle East, Northern Africa and Western Asia are dominated by the followers of Islam. Even Europe is being highly influenced by large populations of Muslims. The descendants of Ishmael and Esau desire to destroy the descendants of Jacob and Isaac. The crowns shifted from the heads, the historical empires to the ten horns which represent the confederation of ten rulers to come during Daniel's 70th week. Satan, the great dragon, will give them the authority to rule for a short time.

The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She had a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead:

MYSTERY BABYLON
THE GREAT
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH

I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.

—Revelation 17:4-6

Babylon, the ecclesiastical Babylon, is the apostate religion that is supported by the beast - the last world empire. The prostitute rides upon the beast. She was drunk with the blood of the saints. The church is the virgin bride of Christ, pure and chaste. The whore is spiritually corrupt. Daniel 11:36-39 tells us that the Antichrist will be successful until the time of God's wrath is completed. He will have no desire for the gods of his fathers, the Greek and Roman gods. He will not regard the god desired by women. He will be in favor of the acts of the sinful nature; orgies, fornications, drunkenness and homosexuality. He will destroy many by the sword, plunder, capture and burn his adversaries. He will make war against the saints, those who hold to the testimony of Jesus during the second half of the tribulation period.

The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.

—Revelation 17:7-8

Revelation 19:20 tells us that the beast and the false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire. Antichrist does not come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. Revelation 20:1-3 explains that Satan will be bound by chains and locked in the Abyss for 1,000 years. Then he will be let loose for a short time to deceive the nations and lead a final rebellion. After he comes up out of the Abyss, he will be defeated in the final rebellion and then go to his destruction. Revelation 13:3 tells us that one of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound, but it had been healed and the whole world was astonished.

"This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.

—Revelation 17:9-10

The topography or terrain that marks the geographical location of the center of the false religion is noted for its seven hills. The Whore of Babylon is a religious system that is characterized as prostituting itself. Spiritual fornication is idol worship. The Empire of the Caesars had its capital in Rome which was built on seven hills and was well-known for its many statues of its Roman gods and goddesses including the Caesars. Julius Caesar as Rome's Pontifex Maximus held supreme religious authority in Rome. He was not only the ruler of the state but the high priest of the pagan Roman religion.

The term "Pontifex Maximus" is applied to the high priest of the Roman Catholic Church today. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition: 'For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise." Not only does the Pope continue under the titles of the Caesars of Rome but claims to be the Vicar of Christ on earth. The Pope claims to be authorized to act as the substitute or agent of Christ on earth. Jesus himself promised us that He would send the Holy Spirit to act on his behalf and not a fallible man. As Christ Jesus had been the Master, Counselor and Guide to believers, He promised to send the Holy Spirit as His substitute so that He might abide with them forever (John 14:16).

The Roman Catholic Church noted for its widespread display and veneration of the statues of saints is in direct opposition to the commandments of God stated in Exodus 20: 4-5a.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:

Although Romanists claim that they are not worshipping the statues of saints or Mary, the very fact that they bow down to them violates God's commandment. The location and practices of the Roman Catholic Church seem to make it the ideal candidate as the Whore of Babylon.

> *The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.*
>
> —Revelation 17:11

John 13:21-27 gives us the account of the Last Supper and the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. "... As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him." I believe that after the Antichrist dies, due to a fatal wound to his head, that Satan will enter into him and counterfeit his resurrection. "The beast, which you saw, once was and now is not" refers to the Antichrist who is killed. Satan who will come up out of the Abyss becomes the eighth king by possessing the body of the Antichrist. The Antichrist is the depraved and wicked seventh king. The feigned resurrected Antichrist is the eighth king. Those who have taken the mark of the beast will be worshipping Satan.

> *"The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."*
>
> —Revelation 17:12-14

The composite beast from out of the sea had ten crowns upon his horns which represents power and authority given to the ten kings for a short time. The beast upon which the Whore of Babylon rode had no crowns upon his horns; at the time of the punishment of the Great Prostitute, the ten kings will give their power and authority to the beast, the Antichrist. All the nations will be gathered to Jerusalem to fight against it and the city will be captured. Zechariah 14 continues in its prophetic account and explains in detail that the LORD will go out and fight against those nations.

Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled. The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.
—Revelation 17:15-18

Isaiah 13 foretold of the destruction and punishment of ancient Babylon by the Medes and Persians. This passage of Scripture is also a description of the future punishment of the city Babylon which is the seat of power of the one-world false religion. The day of the LORD is coming- a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger. Babylon will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah.

REVELATION 18:1-24
THE FALL OF BABYLON

Revelation 18:1-24:

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird, for all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."

Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.' Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.

"When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and

cry: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!'

"The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more—cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men.

"They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn and cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!'

"Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!

Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.' "Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.

The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth."

With a mighty voice a glorious angel shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! The kings of the earth had committed adultery with this great city of power and wealth. Great detail is given concerning her punishment for leading the nations astray. But what were her adulteries and where does she reside?

> *Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to b a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD."*
>
> —Genesis 10:8-9

The fishermen of the Bible use nets which symbolize godly men who evangelize. While the term hunters, fowlers and those who use snares, traps, arrows, or hooks, describe the wicked. *Fishers of men* is a term used by Jesus (Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17) to describe those who would be used to build the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; for now on you will catch men" (Lk 5:10b). Speaking of the kingdom Jesus said, "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into a lake and caught all kinds of fish" (Mt 13:47). On the other hand, Satan is described as a fowler (Ps 91:3) and the evil one who shoots flaming arrows or fiery darts (Eph 6:16).

> *Among my people are wicked men who lie in wait like men who snare birds and like those who set traps to catch men.*
>
> —Jeremiah 5:26

Nimrod is described as a mighty hunter *before the LORD*. He is not a mighty hunter *for the* LORD. Exodus 20:3 reads, "You shall have no other gods before me." Esau is also described as a skillful hunter. As Esau despised his birthright (Gen 25:34b), so did Nimrod despise the LORD'S command. After the worldwide flood, God reiterated his command to man to be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth (Gen 1:28; 9:7). Nimrod was idolized by the people for his skills as a warrior and as a hunter. When wild animals roamed in great numbers, he offered protection, strength and safety. Nimrod led the people astray by having them gather together in cities, instead of filling and subduing the earth as God had commanded. Nimrod name means, "Let us Rebel!"

The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria where he built Ninevah, Rehoboth Ir, Calah and Resen, which is between Ninevah and Calah; that is the great city.

—Genesis 10:10-12

Assyria eventually became a world empire and conquered the Northern Kingdom. In the eighth century B.C., the ten northern tribes of Israel were deported. Over a century later, Babylon became a world empire destroying Jerusalem and the temple. The people of Judah were placed into exile for 70 years. Nimrod built Babel were the ancient Babylonian Mystery religion was birthed. The Mother of Harlots has offspring in every culture.

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

—Genesis 11:1-4

"Come, let's make bricks..." These rebellious people who sought to exalt themselves were masons, as were the ancient Egyptians. Free Masonry is not just a social club. It is built upon Kabbalah which originated in Babylon. Masons meet in a Masonic Lodge which is a temple to Lucifer. There are secret rites, satanic symbols and blood oaths. The tower of Babel was a Ziggurat, which is a pyramid-like structure with an exterior zigzagging staircase. The purpose of a ziggurat was to worship the heavenly hosts - the sun, moon and stars.

Nimrod was worshipped as the sun god and was the founder of the city of Babylon. He married Semiramis who was worshipped as the moon goddess. She became queen who ruled the city of Ninevah. The myth surrounding her was that she left the earth as a dove and was worshipped for fertility, as the goddess of wild birds, as the creator of life; love and sexuality. Their child was Tammuz who was revered as a god of death and resurrection. He represented agricultural death

and rebirth. In the summer he departed for the netherworld when vegetation withered because of the intense heat of the Middle East. Worshippers of Tammuz, especially women, would mourn for him with weeping and loud cries. The Ankh, which looks like a circle with a cross beneath it, is not a Christian symbol but an Egyptian symbol for Tammuz.

Ezekiel chapter eight speaks of great idolatry in the temple that caused the Shekinah glory of God to depart from the temple built by Solomon. Among the detestable things found there were Israelite women mourning for Tammuz (Eze 8:14) and men who were bowing down to the sun in the east (Eze 8:16). Disaster came upon the Jews living in Lower and Upper Egypt after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Babylonians because the wives of the Jews burned incense to the Queen of Heaven, and made cakes and poured drink offerings to her (Jer 44). Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and disaster came upon the Jews because they worshipped the sun (Nimrod), the Queen of Heaven (Semiramis) and Tammuz. Incredibly, during the 70 years of exile in Babylon, the Jews named the 4th month of the Hebrew calendar after Tammuz.

> *But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."*

Genesis 11:5-9

> *So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel —because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.*

When God confused the language of the builders of the Tower of Babel and scattered them throughout the world, the wicked people of the city took their worship of the sun, moon and stars with them. Every pagan culture worships the same heavenly hosts under different names. Semiramis is the name of the moon goddess for the Assyrians. Ashtorah is a moon goddess for the Canaanites. Isis is the Egyptian

name. Ishtar is the Babylonian name. Artemis was worshipped by the Greeks and known as Diana by the Romans. Baal (sun worship), was the chief male deity of the Canaanites, Zeus the chief deity of the Greeks and Jupiter the chief deity of the Romans.

Today the ancient Mystery Babylonian religion not only infiltrates into the Eastern mystic religions, but was practiced by apostate Israel and is a major influence in Islam which is the worship of the moon god Allah and in Roman Catholicism which has many elements that symbolize the sun god. The Holy Roman Emperor Constantine rejected the seventh day Sabbath for the venerable day of the sun. The Roman calendar which names its days and many of its months after pagan gods is a solar calendar.

The Whore of Babylon is a worldwide religious practice that leads nations astray into believing they are worshipping the true God when in fact they are committing spiritual adultery by bowing down before idols. This religion is centered in one particular city and has vast wealth.

> *"This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.*
>
> —Revelation 17:9

> *She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.*
>
> —1 Peter 5:13

She refers to your sister church. The great city in Mesopotamia was in ruins and ancient Babylon was mostly a desert in the first century. It is generally agreed that "Babylon" in 1 Peter 5:13 is a cipher for the city of Rome. There was a reason for connecting the Babylonian and Roman empires, because the Roman legions like those of Babylon at an earlier time destroyed the temple and Jerusalem.

The woman, the Whore of Babylon, is located in the city which is famous for being built on seven hills – Rome.

> *"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall*

not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments.

—Exodus 20:4-6

Roman Catholics claim that they do not worship the statues of saints when they bow before them. But the Word of God commands us not to worship or even bow before a graven image. This religion is one of a works salvation through sacraments and does not have the Bible as its ultimate authority.

The Catholic Catechism claims that the apostles are the original source of Catholic Tradition. They assert, in effect, that the Catholic traditions of papal infallibility, the immaculate conception of Mary, prayer to the saints, veneration of images, the assumption of Mary, Mary the queen of heaven, Mary the mediatrix of all grace, etc., were believed and taught by the apostles but were never set down explicitly in writing in the Bible. Rather, these traditions were supposedly believed from apostolic times, and passed down faithfully from one generation to the next orally. Their oral tradition, not the Bible is the ultimate authority for Romanists.

The result of Catholic teaching is that the Bible is represented as being incomplete, just the written portion of the Word of God, and that only by the alleged oral or unwritten "living tradition" will you have the complete fullness of the inspired Word of God. By "living tradition" they mean the teaching authority of the church passed on through the apostles to their successors, which Catholics call the Magisterium or the teaching arm of the Catholic Church.

The Vatican has accumulated vast wealth for over two thousand years from Caesar to the Space Age. It has vast collections of art treasures, property ownership around the world, collections from its parishioners and does not pay taxes. It is located in Rome. It denies salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It is full of idols and its traditions are associated with Mithraism.

Celebrating the light and fire caused from striking of flints is an ancient tradition. Mithra is said to be forced out of a rock, wearing the Phyrygian cap holding a dagger and a torch of light. Mithra's

birth is celebrated on the Winter Solstice. Christ was most probably incarnated on the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall, but Catholic tradition has us celebrating his birth on the Winter Solstice when Mithra birth was celebrated.

As he grew, Mithra became strong and courageous, eagerly using these traits to fight evil. One of the key stories attached to Mithra, is that he slew a divine bull so that its body parts could assist mankind. The Greeks and Romans considered Mithra as a sun god. Mithras presides over the changing of the seasons and the movement of the heavens themselves. In the ancient cult Mithras was represented by the constellation Persus, who changes the position of the celestial sphere by 'slaying' the constellation Taurus (the Bull). At the spring equinox Mithras moves the earth back into Aries, raising lots of energy and power. Roman Catholicism replaced Passover with Easter. Passover is celebrated on the 14th day of the first month at twilight when the barley harvest is ripe. Easter is calculated using the spring equinox which is venerated by those who worship the solar disc.

Mithraism was popular in the Roman Empire with many Emperors following, not just the populace. It had seven sacraments, the same as the Catholic Church, baptism, and communion with bread and water. The Eucharist hosts were signed with a cross, an ancient phallic symbol which originated in Egypt, and the Egyptian cross (the ankh which represents Tammuz), still shows the original form which included the female symbol.The Roman Catholic Church incorporated pagan traditions into their rituals in order to attract the masses and codify their power, wealth and influence as a Holy Roman Empire.

The Monstrance is used to display a round wafer of bread, called the host, which is used in what is called the Mass, Lord's Supper, Communion or Eucharistic meal. The Catholic believes this wafer of bread turns into the actual body of Christ when consecrated during the Mass. "During the baroque period, the Monstrance took on a rayed form of a sun-monstrance with a circular window surrounded by a silver or gold frame with rays." The priest sometimes holds up the sunburst monstrance with the host encased for the congregation to adore and venerate. Virtually any time the monstrance, a pagan sun symbol, is viewed by the congregation, they kneel in submission.

The Catholic Church describes itself in its documents as engaged in the act of worshipping the Eucharist, which is also called adoration or veneration.

The use of Christmas trees, holly wreaths, Easter eggs, repetitive prayers using the rosary, black garments worn by the priests and many other traditions are not only unbiblical but pagan in their roots.

Many Jews were slaughtered during the crusades and many millions of saints were killed during the Reformation by Roman Catholics. The Roman Empire and its pagan practices have never ceased to exist. It has just changed form.

REVELATION 19:1-21
HALLELUJAH TO THE KING OF KINGS!

Revelation 19:1-9

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!"

Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!" Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' "And he added, "These are the true words of God."

THE EXPRESSION, "HALLELUJAH!" is derived from two Hebrew words meaning "Praise the LORD". Hallelujah is literally translated as "Praise Ye Yahweh!" which is a common form of adoration and thanksgiving in Jewish worship. Praise to the One who causes to be or to come into being. Hallel (Praise) is an expression of gratitude and devotion to Jah (Yaweh): the God who is the Creator of all things. Although it is used four times in the first six verses of this chapter, it is found nowhere else in the New Testament. The first two Hallelujah choruses come from the great heavenly multitudes, who are praising God for his righteous judgment in condemning Babylon the Great. The leaders of the angelic worship, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures, echo the sentiments of the great multitude, by falling down, worshipping God and crying out, "Amen (So be it), Hallelujah!"

The fourth expression of praise to Jehovah is in recognition that the wedding supper of the Lamb has come. The wedding supper takes place after the fall of Babylon. The destruction of the wicked city occurs after the seventh trumpet is sounded. The punishment of the great prostitute is announced by one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls (Rev 17:1). The bride has made herself ready by being purified through the fires of persecution. Fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints. They overcame the accuser of the brethren by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. They were willing to suffer martyrdom for the faith (Rev 12:11). The Mother of Harlots had been drunk with the blood of the saints (Rev 17:6). Now the blood of God's servants has been avenged and it is time for reward and celebration. "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" Happy and joyous are those who have an intimate and eternal relationship with God.

Revelation 19:10

> *At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

John is so overcome by the sight and message of this glorious angel that he mistakenly falls at the feet of this angel intending to worship him. The angel rebukes John explaining that angels are fellow servants of God along with the saints.

Jesus said to him, "Away from me Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the LORD your God, and serve him only.

—Matthew 4:10

Then those who were in the boat worshipped him saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

—Matthew 14:33

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

—John 20:28

Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Jesus is the Archangel Michael. The angel said to John, "Do not do it! ...Worship God!" Jesus accepted worship because He is in very nature God (Romans 1:4).

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The testimony of Jesus is the culmination of all that was written about the Messiah in the Law, The Writings and the Prophets. In his birth ministry, death and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled over three hundred prophecies foretold in the Old Testament.

Revelation 19:11-16

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

At the First Advent, Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey fulfilling the prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9. A king would ride a donkey in times of peace. At the Second Advent, Christ returns to Jerusalem riding on a war-horse.

> *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.*
>
> —Psalm 2:9

The messianic prophecies found in Psalm 2 predict an earthly reign of Christ in which He rules over the rebellious nations in power and authority. "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill" (Psalm 2:6). Although amillennialists claim that the term 'Zion" is a reference to the eternal kingdom (heaven), Christ is promised that the ends of the earth would be his possession.

> *While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain that filled the whole earth.*
>
> —Daniel 2:34-35

The enormous, dazzling statue of Daniel 2 is smashed by a rock that became a huge mountain that filled the whole earth. Christ returns to earth to rule over the survivors from all the nations who have attacked Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:16-19).

Revelation 19:17-18

> *And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great."*

Men from every people, tribe, language and nation gazed upon bodies of the Lord's two witnesses as they were left in the street and refused the decency of a burial (Rev 11:9). Dead bodies left exposed would be subject to carrion birds. The enemies of God who had celebrated the death of the two prophets and left their bodies exposed now have their bodies devoured by the birds of the air. The righteous partake of the wedding supper of the Lamb, while the unrighteous are subject to the great supper of God.

Revelation 19:19-21

> *Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*

There are cults that teach that there is no place of eternal torment, instead the wicked are annihilated. The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur before the 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. After the Millennial Reign of Messiah on earth, Satan is released for a short time to deceive the nations. Revelation 20:10 reads: *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

The False Prophet and the Antichrist still exist and are still suffering torment 1,000 years later when the devil is thrown along with them into the fiery lake. The Scripture is clear that they will be tormented forever.

The enemies of God face eternal death (separation from God), in a place of eternal torment while the children of God are destined to eternal life (God will dwell with them forever), in a place of eternal bliss.

REVELATION 20:1-15
THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST

Revelation 20:1-3

> *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, which is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.*

THE TERM MILLENNIUM is from the Latin mille meaning 'thousand". It is a theological term based upon Revelation 20. Acts 1:6 reads: *So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

The Millennium is a theological term indicating the thousand year period of Christ's future reign on earth with the establishment of the kingdom over Israel. Those who claim that God has finished his dealings with corporate, national Israel then must symbolically interpret passages to conform to their theology. When the passages of Revelation 20 are taken in a more literal sense, it necessitates a belief in an actual physical reign of Christ on earth prior to the final judgment. Those who interpret passages in the New Testament

referring to Israel as meaning the church, hold to one of two views concerning the Millennium.

Those who hold to *Amillennialism* advocate that no Millennium is to occur other than that which is in progress now during the present gospel age. The amillennial view is that Revelation 20 is describing the present reign of the souls of deceased believers with Christ in heaven. It makes no differentiation between Israel and the church. Not only does the apostle Paul make a clear distinction between the church and Israel in passages such as 1 Corinthians 10:32, but also outlines a future for Israel in Romans 11. Amillennialists claim that Satan was bound at the cross and remains so bound until the return of Christ marks the final judgment and the initiation of the eternal state. But that premise flies in the face of such passages as:

> *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*
>
> —1 Peter 5:8

> *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*
>
> —Ephesians 6:10

It is obvious from these two passages that both the apostle Peter and the apostle Paul believe that the devil is active and effective during the church age. The time of the binding of Satan will be a future event after the church age and prior to the coming of the eternal kingdom.

Postmillennialists, on the other hand, do believe in a long period of peace and prosperity on earth called the Millennium. But they contend that the church ushers in this age and the world becomes Christianized before the return of Christ to meet out final judgment and usher in the eternal state. The concept of the world becoming Christianized contradicts the warnings of Jesus concerning the state of humanity just prior to his return.

> *Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other...*
>
> —Matthew 24:9-11a

Instead of peace and prosperity before the return of Christ and the world embracing his teachings, there will be many false teachers and false prophets, the love of many will grow cold, and there also will be a great apostasy and great persecution of the saints. There will be no peace until the Prince of Peace comes to rule and reign.

In the first seven verses of Revelation 20, the term 1,000 years is inscripturated six times. If we are to believe in a literal seven days of creation, why can we not believe in a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth? The creation week was comprised of six days of labor followed by a day of rest. In speaking of the return of Christ, Peter writes: *But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.* 2Peter 3:7

Fallen man was created on day six. We have endured 6,000 years of a cursed earth. The Sabbath day foreshadows the thousand year period of rest and peace known as the Millennium. The 1,000 year period will come to an end when the present heavens and earth are judged by fire and a new heaven and a new earth are instituted.

Revelation 20:4-6

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you.' What then will there be for us?"

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel."
—Matthew 19:27-28

The redemption of corporate, national Israel takes place after the Rapture. Although both those who sleep in Christ, as well as, those in Christ who are alive at his coming have been transformed *in the twinkling of an eye* (1 Co 15:52), the twelve tribes of Israel enter into the Millennium in their mortal bodies. The original apostles have been raised in glorified bodies to sit as judges over Israel. They will mediate disputes and inform the parties involved of God's decrees and laws as did Moses and his appointed judges (Ex 18:16, 25-26).

The first resurrection is the resurrection of the righteous that takes place just prior to the Millennium at the Rapture. Those who are righteous by faith in Christ are resurrected to eternal life and will rule and reign with Christ over his millennial kingdom.

> *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."*
>
> *The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.*
>
> —Psalm 110:1-2

Jesus is now at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us until God pours out the bowls of his wrath upon his enemies. Jesus will sit on David's throne in Zion ruling over those who have survived after the battle of Armageddon. The 1,000 year reign of Christ will be the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Adonai (the Lord) ruling in the midst of his enemies.

> *"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more." "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'*
>
> —Luke 19:16-17

In this kingdom parable of Jesus, we are told that the king will reward his faithful servants by appointing them to positions of rulership. Note that it wasn't a big matter that earned the servant his right to reign, but his trustworthiness in a small matter. God doesn't necessarily reward us based upon our rate of success, but upon our faithfulness in what He entrusts to us. Those who are in Christ are a

royal priesthood and a holy nation. During the Millennium we shall rule and reign with him over the nations.

> *The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.*
>
> —Isaiah 11:6

> *They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*
>
> —Isaiah 11:9

The Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne in Zion at the renewal of all things. The capital of the millennial kingdom (Jerusalem) marks a renewal of the state of the Garden of Eden as it existed as very good before the fall of man. Both the saved remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel, as well as, the survivors from all nations that attacked Jerusalem (Zech 14:16) enter the Millennium in their corruptible bodies. All of Israel will dwell in Zion on God's holy mountain where animals will return to their docile state. Before the fall, the animals did not devour one another. They lived in harmony as herbivores.

> *The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*
>
> —Isaiah 11:7

Up until the time of the flood, the prediluvian patriarchs lived for hundreds and hundreds of years. Adam lived for 930 years. Methuselah who enjoyed the greatest longevity lived for 969 years. No one is recorded to have lived for a full 1,000 years. During the Millennium great longevity will be restored to those on God's holy mountain.

> *Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought to be a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.*
>
> —Isaiah 65:20

The 1,000 year reign of Christ marks a time of world peace. All the cities of the world will collapse at the outpouring of the seventh bowl of God's wrath. During the Millennium, people will return to pastoral living. Although the wicked who survive will bow their knee to him, their hearts will still be hardened.

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation nor will they train for war anymore.

—Isaiah 2:4

Revelation 20:7-10

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The great numbers of those who are gathered for battle at the end of the 1,000 years indicate the wickedness of the unregenerate human heart. Even with Satan bound for a thousand years and Christ on the throne in Jerusalem, rebellion is easily instigated when Satan is loosed.

Revelation 20:11-15

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the

lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Among the books that were opened (the words and deeds of each individual) as well as the Old and New Testament, was the Book of Life. There will be some at the White Throne judgment who will be spared from the Lake of Fire. The second resurrection, for the most part, will unite disembodied, spiritually dead souls with transformed immortal bodies. They will be ushered into the presence of God to be judged for degree of punishment. They have been resurrected to life (spiritually alive/no longer separated from God), only to be cast from his presence for eternity. They will suffer the second death as they are cast into the Lake of Fire. They will go from the glory of his presence to eternal separation and great torment.

REVELATION 21:1-27
A NEW HEAVEN, A NEW EARTH AND A NEW JERUSALEM

GENESIS MEANS ORIGIN in Greek. The Hebrews call the first book of the Bible (the book of origins), *bᵉrēšhît* meaning: "in the beginning." The first two chapters of Scripture (Genesis chapters one and two) concern the origin of the physical creation of all plant, animal and human life. These first two chapters are echoed and completed in the last two chapters of the Bible (Revelation chapters twenty-one and twenty-two). Genesis is the beginning of the end, while Revelation is the end of the beginning. There are many connections between first things (protology) and last things (eschatology).

> *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*
>
> —Genesis 1:1

> *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*
>
> —Revelation 21:1

The first passage in Scripture speaks of God creating the heavens (plural). The apostle Paul confirms this fact in 2Corinthians 12:2a where it is written: *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven.*

From our earthly perspective the first heavens comprise the earth's atmosphere where weather patterns are formed.

> *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.*
>
> —Genesis 7:11

The third heaven is the Paradise of God. We may surmise that between the earth's atmosphere (the first heavens) and God's abode beyond the created universe (the third heaven), lies the second heavens which is the great void of outer space. Revelation chapter 21 states that there will be a new heaven (singular) and a new earth. After the fall of man, the earth and the first heaven were cursed. Prior to the flood it had never rained; instead, streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground (Genesis 2:6). Storms are a result of the curse. The present cursed heavens (the atmosphere) and the cursed earth are reserved for fire (2Peter 3:7).

> *The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.*
>
> —2 Pe 3:10b

The cleansing fire of God will burn away the curse. The present oceans, which are a result of the flood, will no longer exist in the eternal state. There will be a new heaven and a new earth and no longer will there be the tossing of a turbulent sea.

Revelation 21:2-3

> *I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

Along with the new heaven and the new earth will be the New Jerusalem. The glory of the LORD (the shᵉkinâh or visible divine Presence) had departed from the Most Holy Place in Solomon's temple

due to Israel's idolatry. Shekinah is Aramaic and Late Hebrew for *residence*. The glory cloud hovered over the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle. Later on, the Presence temporarily took up residence in the Holy of Holies in the temple built by Solomon. In the New Jerusalem, God will eternally dwell with his people. Never again will there be any idolatry because nothing impure will enter into the Holy City, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful (Revelation 21:27).

> *What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:" I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."*
>
> —2 Corinthians 6:16

Revelation 21:4

> He *will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

For those in Christ, God will personally wipe away ever tear from their eyes. While for the wicked, there will be eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12). For the people of God, there will be no more death or pain; while the enemies of God will suffer the second death and eternal torment (Revelation 20:10).

Revelation 21:5-7

> *He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.*
>
> *"I am the Alpha and the Omega" says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*
>
> —Revelation 1:8

John saw eternal God seated on the throne. Even Jehovah's Witnesses will admit that these passages in Revelation chapters one and twenty-one refer to Jehovah.

> *"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.*
>
> —Revelation 22:12

It is evident that Jesus is speaking in Revelation 22:12. In the following verse Jesus describes his eternality:

> *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."*
>
> —Revelation 22:13

The title, "*The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last*" applies both to YHWY, the LORD God as well as to the Lord Jesus. Jesus is not the Archangel Michael who is a merely a created being as claimed by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

> *For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.*
>
> —Hebrews 11:5-8

The eternally begotten Son is God who is worshipped by angels and will be enthroned forever.

> *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.*
>
> —Revelation 21:8

In this description of the wicked the cowardly are listed first. Although the sins of idolatry and murder are listed in the Ten

Commandments, the cowardly are listed even before murderers and idolaters. Cowards are those who have professed Christ but when threatened with persecution for Christ's sake, will love their lives so much that they will lose them (Matthew 16:25). Jesus' most strident rebukes were not against recognized sinners such as tax collectors and prostitutes, but against self-righteous hypocrites.

The scribes and the Pharisees will be judged more harshly because they did not sin unintentionally in ignorance. I believe that when Jesus declared forgive them Father for they do not know what they are doing, Jesus was speaking of the both the Gentiles and the Jews that did not have access to the prophetic Scriptures found in the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings that foretold His Coming. The Pharisees and the Scribes, on the other hand, were harshly rebuked for following the letter of the Law without practicing the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. They utilized their position in the community for selfish ends, instead of serving others to the glory of God. Instead of embracing the spirit of the Law, they pridefully believed that they could fulfill the letter of the Law. The Christian in name only is no less a hypocrite than a Pharisee. True Christians will stand the test of fire and will not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

The devil was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44a). All murders will be cast into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Those who suppress the truth that God is the Creator are given over to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another (Romans 1:18, 24). The sexually immoral will spend eternity in the fiery lake. Those who practice magic arts are empowered by and serve demonic spirits. Those who are involved with the occult, witchcraft, psychics and the New Age will be tormented in the eternal lake of fire. When an idolater offers up a sacrifice, he is actually sacrificing to demons (Psalm 106:36-37). Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44b). Idolaters and all liars will spend eternity in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Those Christians who are left and alive at the Lord's coming, will join those who are asleep in Christ at the resurrection of the righteous to meet the Lord in the air and so be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The wicked, on the other hand, will be

resurrected only to be cast into the fiery lake of burning sulfur and so be separated from God forever. Sulfur burns with a blue flame. The lake of burning sulfur will leave the sufferer in darkness, affecting the sense of sight. The fiery lake of sulfur will torment with burning pain, affecting the sense of touch. Burning sulfur has a noxious odor, affecting the senses of smell and taste. The wicked will not be able to see one another but will hear one another's weeping and screams, affecting the sense of hearing. Each of the five senses will be conduits of pain and suffering for eternity for those who reject Christ's substitutionary death and blood atonement. Eternal mental, physical and spiritual anguish await those who prefer darkness over light.

> *One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."*
>
> —Revelation 21:9

This passage of Scripture is another proof text that reinforces the doctrine of a Pre-Wrath Rapture. The angel who is about to show the apostle John the bride, was one of the angels who had poured out one of the seven final plagues upon the earth. The seven last plagues marked the completion of God's wrath (Revelation 15:1). The seven angels who had the seven bowls were not released until the seventh trumpet announced the coming of God's wrath (Revelation 11:18). The church is raptured at the seventh and final trumpet

(1 Corinthians 15:52). Now that the bowl judgments have been poured out, the bride of Christ is being called the wife of the Lamb for the first time in Scripture. This is another indication that the capturing out of the church (the Rapture) and subsequent wedding of the Lamb, takes place after the seventh angel sounds his trumpet (before [pre] the bowl judgments [wrath]).

Revelation 21:10-14

> *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates and with twelve angels at the gates. On*

the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Jewish men were required to come into Jerusalem for worship at the temple in celebration of the Passover. Ordinarily, they would journey back to their homes after the offering of First Fruits to tend to their fields and flocks. They then would return to the temple fifty days later in observance of the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost). After our risen Lord had appeared to the disciples over a period of forty days, He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem for the promised gift of the Father (the Holy Spirit). When the disciples questioned Jesus about the time of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, He told them that it was not for them to know the times or dates that the Father had set. Jesus then issued the *Great Commission* to go into all the world.

After he had said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

—Acts 1:9-11

The disciples' last glimpse of the glorified Christ was of the soles of his feet disappearing into a cloud.

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.

—Acts 1:12

The Mount of Olives was about 2,000 cubits (3,500 ft. or approximately 3/5 mile) from Jerusalem. This distance may have been based upon the distance between the Ark of God and the people when they crossed over the Jordan (Joshua 3:4). The Lord ascended from the Mount of Olives into heaven. The two angels (a matter was established by two or three witnesses [Deuteronomy

19:15]), proclaimed that Jesus would return in likewise manner. He will descend onto the Mount of Olives and walk into Jerusalem. The Lord's return to earth will occur on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement,) which is a day in which no work is allowed to be done (Leveticus 23:28) and the distance that a devout Jew may travel would be restricted to a Sabbath day's walk. He will then enter the temple by way of the east gate and enter into the Holy of Holies to sit on his glorious throne in Zion.

> *On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.*
>
> —Zechariah 14:4

The return of Christ to the earth will also be marked by all the land surrounding Jerusalem being leveled (Zechariah 14:10), but Jerusalem being raised up. The mountain described by John as being great and high is a picture of Mount Zion as it will appear during the Millennium. At the close of the Millennium, the "Great White Throne Judgment" will take place. The wicked will be cast into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, while those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will enter into the New Jerusalem. The hypocrites suffer in outer darkness. While those who are in Christ will bask in the brilliance of the Holy City which shines with the radiance of God's glory and is established upon twelve glorious foundations.

In order to enter into the Holy City, one must enter through one of the twelve gates upon which are written one of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The inscriptions upon the gates will serve to emote a spirit of thanksgiving (enter his gates with thanksgiving (Psalm 100:43) as the nations are reminded:

> *Consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone.*
>
> —Ephesians 2:19-20

Revelation 21:15-21

The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

In the great high wall that will surround the New Jerusalem are twelve gates. Twelve is the number of government. The four sections of the wall will border on one of the four points of the compass. Four is the number of creation. In order for God's creatures to enter into the Holy City they must pass through one of three gates that are located in either the northern, southern, eastern or western section of the wall. Three is the number of the Trinity. God's people gain access to his eternal habitation through the Son who has made a new and living way to the Father through the power of the Spirit. The city is a perfect cube that is 12,000 stadia (approximately 1,400 miles) long, high and wide. Its building materials are precious gems and purest gold which symbolize materials that do not corrupt, wear out, or decay. Its great wall symbolizes protection from any and all enemies.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.
—Luke 12:32-33

Revelation 21:22-26

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

Presently, our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. In the New Jerusalem, the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its' temple. It will be eternally lit by the glory of God and the Lamb will be its lamp.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

—Hebrews 1:3a

The present creation is under a curse and is dying. The sun is burning out and the moon's light is but a poor reflection of the sun's radiance. In the New Jerusalem, there will be no need of the sun or the moon. As opposed to the sun, the glory of God the Father never diminishes. As contrasted to the moon, the Son of God does not shine by reflection. He is the radiance of God's glory. The New Jerusalem is a perfectly designed, incorruptible habitation that radiates eternally with the glory of God.

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

—Revelation 21:27

REVELATION 22: 1-21

AMEN. COME, LORD JESUS!

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing on the nations.

—Revelation 22:1-2

THE WATER OF life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is important to note that there is but one throne from which both God the Father and the Lamb rule. During his earthly ministry Jesus proclaimed, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:11), and "... we are one" (John 17:22). The fact that the water of life flows from a single throne occupied by both the Father and the Son is another proof text for the doctrine of the Trinity.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.

—John 7:37-38

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) is a weeklong celebration of the final harvest. Choice fruit from the trees, palm fronds, leafy

branches and poplars are gathered into booths where the Israelites are to live for seven days in remembrance of the dwelling of the Israelites booths in the wilderness after the Exodus (Leviticus 23:39-42). The construction and decoration of the booth is very similar to a *kupah* or wedding canopy. During the Feast of Tabernacles, Jewish males wave a palm branch which is intertwined with branch of a myrtle and a branch of a willow called a *Lulov.* They also carry a citrus fruit known as an *Etrog.* They wave the lulov up and down in all four directions while carrying the etrog in the booth. The wave offering up and down in all four directions is symbolic of the omnipresence of God. The three-in-one lulov is a picture of the Triune Godhead. This final festival of the LORD, which takes place for seven days, is a picture of the wedding feast of the Lamb followed by the Millennium where God tabernacles (dwells) with men. Both the first day of this festival and the day after the week of celebration are Sabbaths, times of sacred assembly and rest. The second sacred assembly takes place on the eighth day. The last and greatest day of the Festival is a picture of the eternal kingdom.

When the temple stood in Jerusalem, on the last and greatest day of the Feast, a special tradition was practiced. The "yoreh" (the former or early rains) begin in autumn in the eighth Hebrew month of Cheshvan, which corresponds to the end of October/November. While the "malkosh" (latter rains), begin in first month of the Hebrew calendar, Nisan which is March/April. The critical latter rains are the heavy showers that come before the harvest and the long summer drought.

After a weeklong celebration, there would be a huge fire lighted processional down to the pool of Siloam. The high priest would fill a golden pitcher with water from the pool. He timed his return to coincide with the priests bringing their sacrifices to the altar including a priest carrying wine in a pitcher for a drink offering. All the devout Jews would follow the high priest back up to the altar in order to pour the water and the wine into silver basins. This annual event was performed as an appeal to the LORD for the much needed fall rains. It was in light of this tradition that Jesus called out in a loud voice that He would provide streams of living water. Water which stagnated in the heat of the Middle East would breed disease organisms and would

cause illness and even death. But cold running water was known as living water. The term living water symbolizes the Holy Spirit who not only refreshes but empowers to give eternal life.

On either side of the river stands the tree of life which bears its marvelous fruit. Just as in the Garden of Eden, before the fall, man ate from trees which were pleasing to the eye and good for *food* (Genesis 2:9), man will eat delicious fruit in the New Jerusalem. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden (Genesis 2:10). But in the New Jerusalem, out of the throne of God and the Lamb flow rivers of the water of life.

Revelation 22:3-5

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet be made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

—I John 3:2

We shall see the glorious face of the risen Lord. His name will be written on our foreheads indicating that we are his and we shall be like him. The Holy City will be lighted by the glory of God as it radiates in the face of Jesus.

Revelation 22:6

The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

—2 Peter 1:20-21

The Lord is the God of the spirits of the prophets. These holy men of old did not write prophecy by means of their own will or interpretation but were carried along by the Holy Spirit. When the apostle Paul was on route to Rome, the ship he was traveling on was caught in a hurricane force storm called a northeaster. The ship could not head into the wind; so they gave way to it and were driven along (Acts 27:15). The Greek word *pherô* translated here in Acts as driven is the same word translated as carried in the passage from 2 Peter. The natural phenomenon of wind that drove Paul's ship symbolizes the spiritual action of the Holy Spirit who guides the prophets into prophetic utterances.

If two differently designed sailing vessels, such as a schooner and catamaran, gave way and were driven by the same wind, they each would be driven along in the same direction. Yet each, according to its own design, would maneuver differently. In much the same manner, the prophets were carried along by the Holy Spirit. They were not mere pens in the hand of the Spirit writing mechanically. Instead, they wrote in their own style which reflected their personal education, experiences and character traits.

> *"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."*
>
> —Revelation 22:7

This verse found in the last chapter of the book of Revelation is reflective of a verse found in the first chapter of this book of prophecy,

> *Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*
>
> —Revelation 1:3

Christians have been encouraged and strengthened by the promises of eternal reward for faithfulness in the midst of harsh persecution for over nineteen centuries since the writing of this epistle to the churches. But has the Lord been slow in keeping his promise?

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

—2 Peter 3:8-9

Revelation 22:8-9

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. "Worship God!"

Man is not to worship idols, or men, or even angels. Our God is a jealous God. *It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* (Hebrews 10:31).

Revelation 22:10-11

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

This passage stands in opposition to the commands given to the prophet Daniel in the sixth century B.C. concerning the prophecy that Daniel was given.

He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.

—Daniel 12:9-10

The slain Lamb was found worthy to open the scroll (Revelation 5:9).

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

—Revelation 22:12

If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved but only as one escaping through the flames.

—1 Corinthians 3:12-15

Those who have built on the foundation laid down by the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20) will have the durability of their work revealed with fire. The building whose foundation has been laid is the church. The fire is the persecution which will test the quality of each saint's work. The work of the church is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Those who claim to be Christians and those who are truly regenerated by God's Spirit will both face the prospect of persecution. Only those who are truly born again will stand firm in the faith when persecuted and threatened with martyrdom (Matthew 24:13), while there will be a great falling away among those who merely call themselves Christians (Luke 8:13; Matthew 24:12). The Day that will bring it to light is the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:8). On that day the church will be raptured and only true saints will be translated in the twinkling of an eye. Those who have not built with incorruptible materials (living stones) will not be punished but suffer the loss of special rewards.

The New Testament speaks of five crowns or rewards. James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10 both refers to the *crown of life.* Eternal life is the reward for persevering under trial and willingness to suffer even unto death for the faith. Peter writes of a *crown of glory* for those elders who are willing to serve as shepherds of God's flock (1 Peter 5:2-4). There is a *crown of rejoicing* for those who are wise and win souls (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20; Philippians 4:1). All those who long for the appearing of the Lord, the righteous Judge, will receive the *crown of righteousness* (2 Timothy 4:8). The *everlasting crown* or *incorruptible*

crown will be given for those who glorify God with their body and do not yield to fleshly lusts (1 Corinthians 9:25-27).

The thief on the cross was promised that he would be in paradise with Jesus although the thief had no chance to do good works after he came to saving faith. We are not saved by our works but we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). The Lord will reward those who have done works of righteousness while in the body at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Crowns symbolize authority and power. In the parable of the ten minas, a man went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then return to his native land. After he was made king, he returned home and sent for his servants to whom he had entrusted ten minas. The first came to him and said that his master's mina had earned ten more.

> *"'Well done, my good servant! His master replied. Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'*
>
> —Matthew 25:23

During the Millennium, the resurrected saints will rule and reign with Christ over the nations. The scope of the sphere of each glorified saint's authority will be in accordance with the degree of reward received at the judgment seat of Christ.

> *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*
>
> —Revelation 22:13

> *For the law was given through Moses; grace and peace came through Jesus Christ.*
>
> —John 1:17

In Hebrew the word for truth is *emet*. It is spelled with three consonants. Aleph is the first letter, Mem is the middle letter, and Tav is the final letter of the Hebrew word for truth. Aleph is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and Tav is the last. Mem is the middle letter of the alphabet and represents everything in between. Jesus is

the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6). He is the embodiment of all truth. He is the first and the last and everything in between. Emet is translated as both faithful and true.

> *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.*
>
> —Revelation 19:11

The Hebrew word for faithful and true is spelled with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the middle letter of the alphabet, and the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. He who called "Faithful and True" is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Revelation 22:14-15

> *"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*

Eternally joyful and happy are those who have washed away the filth and stain of sin from their garments in the precious blood of the Lamb. They will dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Psalm 23:6). To enter through the gates of the New Jerusalem, one must be the righteousness of God in Christ by faith. While outside in outer darkness are the dogs. Dogs are ceremonially unclean animals who symbolize men who do evil.

In the parable of the ten virgins, the five foolish virgins were locked out of the wedding banquet (Matthew 25:10-11). The worthless servant of the parable of the talents was thrown outside into the darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30).

Those who remain outside of the gates of the Holy City remain dead in their sins and trespasses because they have not washed clean in the atoning blood of the lamb.

> *A fool says in his heart, "There is no God."*
>
> —Psalm 14:1

The foolish virgins had the appearance of believers but their hearts (lamps) were void of oil (the Holy Spirit). The worthless servant was disobedient to the command of his master. If Christ is truly our Lord, then we must bear fruit. Any branch that does not bear fruit is thrown into the fire (John 15:6). Only by abiding in the vine (Christ) can one bear the fruit of the Spirit and reproduce fruit after one's own kind (spiritual children). In the parable of the sower only the seed that fell on good soil was capable of yielding a crop. Some may believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away (Luke 8:14). Their belief is not a heartfelt conviction that will stand the test of persecution, persevere, and produce a crop of righteousness.

Revelation 22:16

> *"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."*

Jesus is both the Root (the predecessor) and the Offspring (the descendant) of King David. Jesus is the First and the Last. He is both the Son of God and the Son of Man. The Christ is both the High Priest and the sacrificial lamb. He is the Beginning and the End. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb of God who takes way the sin of the world. He is both the suffering servant and soon coming king. He is the Alpha and Omega.

Revelation 22:17

> *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

> *When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*
>
> —John 16:8-11

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to bring men to conviction. The calling of the bride (the church) is to spread the gospel. Both the Spirit and the bride say, *"Come to Christ and drink living water that wells up to eternal life!*

Revelation 22:18-21

> *I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.*

The written revelation of God to man is complete as this last book of the biblical canon is finished.

2 Peter 1:3

> *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness*

There is a severe warning for those who would dare add another word to the divinely inspired Word of God, let alone adding another book, such as The Book of Mormon or the Qu'ran. In the Holy Scriptures we have been given everything that we need to live a godly life and to have assurance of eternal life in Christ.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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Interpreting Revelation . . . in its Proper Context

Too often the Western Church views Scripture from a Greek Mind-set within the context of a Hellenized society. The Church follows a pagan, Roman solar calendar which fashions a linear, compartmentalized interpretation of the Bible—especially the Book of Revelation.

Contrary to this modernist approach, the prophets and writers of the New Testament wrote the Scriptures under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit from a Hebrew cultural context. The authors lived in accordance with the Torah and the lunar Hebrew calendar. The Hebrew historical view is cyclical and the Hebrew Mind-set encompasses a complete lifestyle. The Hebrew and Greek Mind-sets differ in practice. The Hebrew is concerned with action, the Greek with knowledge. Right conduct is the ultimate concern of the Hebrew, right thinking that of the Greek. This distinction is critical because it affects how the Book of Revelation is interpreted.

The end-time chronology of the Book of Revelation is not a strict linear account as is often viewed from the Hellenistic Mind-set. Through a Hebrew narrative of spiraling pictures, Revelation gives an overview of the Apocalypse followed by specific details which unveil the future of the nation of Israel, unbelievers and the body of Messiah. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* is a unique, verse-by-verse account of the Book of Revelation viewed from a Hebraic Mind-set.

Steven L. Sherman is a Jewish believer in Jesus whose personal testimony of coming to Christ was featured on the "700 Club." He has authored *The Last Days Calendar: Understanding God's Appointed Times* and has made guest appearances on CTN. Steven has also been a featured speaker at conferences, various churches and seminars concerning Jewish Feast Days and End Times Prophecy.

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